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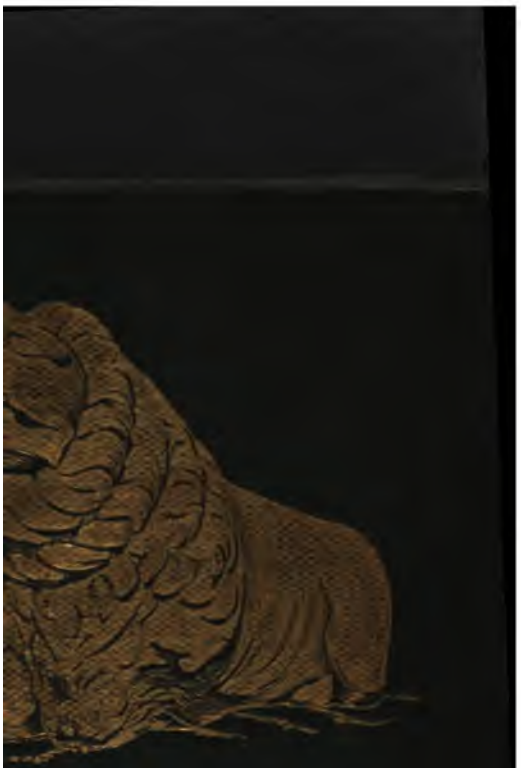
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A VISIT TO BASHAN AND ARGOB









DOORWAY AND STONE DOOR, DEIR NILEH.





DOORWAY AND STONE DOOR, DEIR NILEH.







A VISIT

TO

BASHAN AND ARGOB

BY

MAJOR ALGERNON HEBER-PERCY

WITH PREFATORY NOTE BY CANON TRISTRAM

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SHIBLEH BEY'S BOY AND MALE ATTENDANT.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE writer of the following pages describes a dash made by himself, accompanied by his wife and sons, from Damascus to Bosra and Salcah and back. Very few, if any, ladies had previously accomplished this journey, which has always been, owing to the physical character of the country, one of exceptional difficulty and danger, albeit of exceptional interest. A network of rocky ravines on the edge of the great Syrian desert has from the earliest ages afforded a



secure Alsatia to the choicest ruffians and criminals of Arabia. A considerable portion of the country has been colonised by the Druses, and is safe, but the northern and southern extremities still harbour the bandits who have infested them for centuries.

The region, whose history is entwined with that of Israel from the time of the Exodus, disappears from history from the time when Chosroes II. desolated Syria and extinguished its civilisation and Christianity.

Bashan is first brought to our notice in the history of the Exodus, when the Israelites, after their first conquest, that of Sihon, King of the Amorites, extending from the Arnon to the Jabbok, 'turned and went up by the way of Bashan, *i.e.* followed up the course of the Jabbok and met Og, King of Bashan, at Edrei. Him they slew, and took possession of all his country, which included not only Bashan proper, known in later times as Batanea; but also Geshur, in later times known as Gaulanitis, now the Jaulân, the volcanic region west of the Galilæan lake. South of this, was the Greek Aulanitis, and east of it Trachonitis, the Argob of the Old Testament. This district is now known as the Lejâh, a labyrinth of chasms and cracks in a vast volcanic field, while to the east of it stretches the Ard el Bathanyeh, the richest district in Syria. On the boundary-line of these two, the journey here described was made. It was famous for its oaks and wild cattle, 'the bulls of Bashan,' but is only occasionally alluded to in Scripture, until it was conquered by Hazael, King of Syria. Its subsequent story is rather to

be read in its ruins than in the records of history. It had a dense and wealthy population during the Seleucid or Greek dynasty of Syria. Antiochus Epiphanes and his successors lavishly embellished it with temples and theatres, and in the early centuries of the Christian era it was the seat of many bishoprics, up to the time of the Persian invasion in A.D. 611.

Perhaps some of the buildings of the time of Moses still exist—the sixty cities of Argob, the cities of the giants. They may be recognised by what is called the Cyclopean architecture, not built in courses, but the stones unsquared, selected to fit into each other. The greater portion of the existing buildings are of the Greek period, squared and dressed, with many Greek inscriptions, sometimes with the Syrian dates given. To these are to be added the Christian buildings of the time of Imperial Rome. The importance of the region in Greek and Roman times is shown by the number of coins of the various cities, especially of Bosra.

The first European of modern times who penetrated it was the German Seetzen in 1805, who was murdered by the Bedouin. He was followed in 1812 by the Swiss Burckhardt, and four years later by Buckingham, who, unlike his predecessors, returned in safety. The archæological researches of Burckhardt especially have been most valuable. Since then, M. Rey, Wetstein, the American Robinson, Cyril Graham, and especially Dr. Porter, have each contributed to our knowledge of the unique antiquities of the Haurân; and hardly one of these escaped without incurring most imminent perils from the bandits of the frontier.

Dr. Porter and his companion were dangerously wounded, and narrowly escaped with their lives at Edrei. When once past the frontier, however, an English traveller may always feel himself safe amongst the Druses, whose country is more accessible from the south or west than from the north.

After the invasion of Mehemet Ali in 1832 the country, for a time, was open, and comparatively safe. But when, after the Druse massacres of 1860 in the Lebanon, a number of the ringleaders took refuge among their kinsmen in the Haurân, the Turks endeavoured to close the country to travellers; they refused permission, unless for very special reasons, to pass from Damascus into the Druse country. The Turkish Government, a few years later, instigated by a European power, forcibly suppressed the Protestant schools, which, to the number of more than twenty, the Church Missionary Society had established in the cities of Bashan. When the writer was in Palestine at that period these were easily reached from the west and south. I remember on one occasion, when Aghyle Agha was paramount among the Bedouin, Mr. Zeller, the C.M.S. missionary at Nazareth, along with a few Oxonians, among whom was Mr. Victor Williamson, C.B., passed up to Damascus, without any preparation beyond a knowledge of the people and the language, encountering no difficulties. The writer subsequently visited parts of the region under the protection of the Beni Sakk'r.

H. B. TRISTRAM.



HOUSE AT ISMAREEN.

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LEBANON FROM THE PLAIN OF THE BEKAA.

A VISIT TO BASHAN AND ARGOB

CHAPTER I

ARGOB OR THE LEJÂH.

HAVING long desired to see Jebel-Haurân, or, as it is now commonly called, Jebel Druse, and the district of the Lejâh, the Biblical Bashan and Argob, and having made all the necessary arrangements, we left England on March 24, 1894. At Beyrout, which we reached on April 9, we found our old dragoman, Najm Abou Katar, awaiting us, and our camp ready pitched at the Pines. On the following day, our party (consisting of my wife, my two sons, and myself) started on horseback for Damascus. There I received a special permission to travel in the Jebel-Haurân, through the kindness of Lieut.-Colonel Trotter, and of Mr. Eyres, British Consul at Damascus.

In a bitterly cold wind and occasional rainstorms, we made our start on April 17, riding down the Mecca road,



and through the Mecca gate. Many people were on the road, going to and fro from the great Haj, now camped at Mezarib.

We passed two camels with loads on their backs, guarded by zaptiehs on horseback, bound for the pilgrimage. At the pretty village of El Kesweh we halted for luncheon, taking shelter in the khan from a passing rainstorm.

The khan consisted of a rectangular room open to the road, with a raised seat covered with carpets running round its three sides, mud floors, and a door in the middle of the wall leading to a stable at the back. A fountain in the centre made a pleasant trickling, spouting out of a bamboo cane with a nail driven through it, that divided the stream into two jets, which fell on opposite curves. A brilliantly-coloured flycatcher sat perched on the opposite side of the road making raids on the different insects that passed, and occasionally venturing a bold dash right in over our heads at a more than usually tempting fly. A blind half-witted young man felt his way about the court, and propped himself upon his stick in the corner; an old zaptieh, with grizzled moustache and grey badly-shaved cheeks, his bandolier stuffed full of cartridges hanging on his shoulder, squatted on the seat opposite, hugging his abâyeh round him, and smoking his nargileh stolidly, his eyes alone showing that he was closely watching our proceedings.

Our servants laid our luncheon, boiled the kettle for tea, with many yallah! yallahs! and generally swaggered it over

the inhabitants. A shrill scream came from our little stallions tied up outside, with sounds of kicking, quieted by shouts from our grooms; and a sheyk ambled by on his mare, his knees up to his chin and looking an odd lump of cloak and



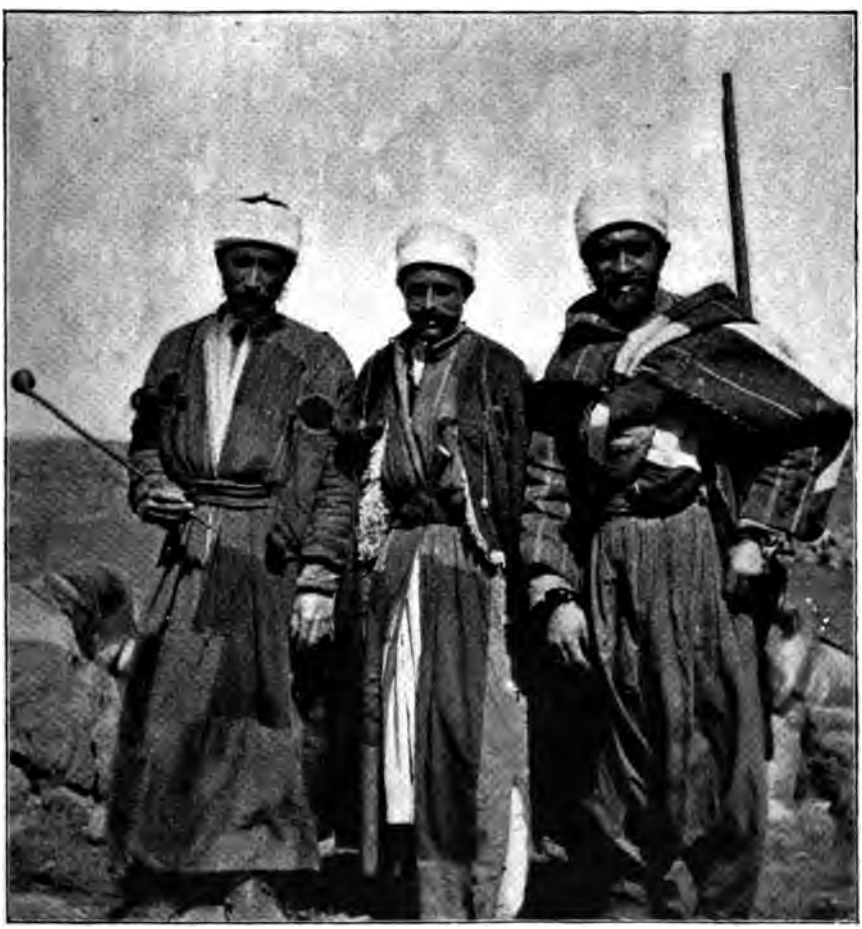
THE KHAN AT EL KESWEH.

shawl. He was followed by an attendant, and stopped to make a purchase from a tumbledown mud-built stall, where grain and unknown compounds were vended. A strong, pungent, semi-aromatic, and not wholly disagreeable smell pervaded the air. Noiselessly, with soft, slow, stately steps,



came a string of camels, looking quietly right and left as they passed along with rhythmically swinging burdens, their expanding cushions of feet making no sound on the roadway. Next, a donkey jogged along, his rider sitting well back on what might be either his saddle, his bedding, the donkey's next meal, or his personal luggage, and appearing to dread cold in his head, for that was closely wrapped up in his abâyeh, to the great loss of his wretched shanks and feet, which were quite exposed to the bitter wind.

After luncheon we left the road, and turning to a trail trending to the south-east, were fairly launched into the Haurân. It appears to be a treeless country, in parts very stony, especially on the low hills; the plains are rich, but here poorly cultivated. We wound on in single file along the track, passing now and then some Bedouin goat or cattle herdsmen crouching down under their abâyehs, sheltering from the wind and rain squalls. There are no single houses, but at long, very long, intervals small villages with mud walls and flat roofs. At last we saw our tents ahead of us, pitched close to the Mussulman village of Deir Ali. The wind, the rain, and the clay soil made it anything but a pleasant camp; but a good dinner helped us to take a more cheerful view of things. Two Druses, armed with ante-diluvian firelocks, came down to guard our tents, so Najm and I entered into a long discussion with them as to our best plan for proceeding to the Jebel-Haurân. I had imagined that our best way would be to make a course to



ESCORT OF ARMED DRUSES.



Musmeih, the ancient Phænus, the capital of Trachonitis, and then down the western edge of the Lejâh, that we might be able to achieve a quick excursion inside this curious country towards Dama, as, from all I could read or learn, the eastern side of the Lejâh was barely inhabited and very unsafe, being open to raids from the Bedouin on both sides. The Druses assured me that I was quite wrong, that the road from Burâk to Jebel-Haurân or Jebel-Druse, as it is now more commonly called, was full of Druse villages, and absolutely safe from Bedouin raids, whilst the western side was sparsely inhabited, and the Bedouin of the Lejâh were constantly ekeing out their precarious existence in that inhospitable tract by ghazus into the plain of the Haurân; further, that the Bedouin had entirely broken up, and rendered impassable the narrow and difficult track to Dama.

After considerable thought, I decided on taking the route on the eastern side; and on the following morning, making a south-east course, we sighted the Lejâh at about eleven o'clock, and arrived at Burâk at noon. There we found shelter from the wind under the edge of the lava, and halted for luncheon, and to let our baggage pass us. The Lejâh I may as well describe at once. A vast torrent of red-hot lava has been poured over the plain of the Haurân from the volcanic region at the south-eastern corner of Argob, the ancient name of the Arkub el Lejâh. Widening as it flowed, it extended itself over the plain till it covered a pear-shaped

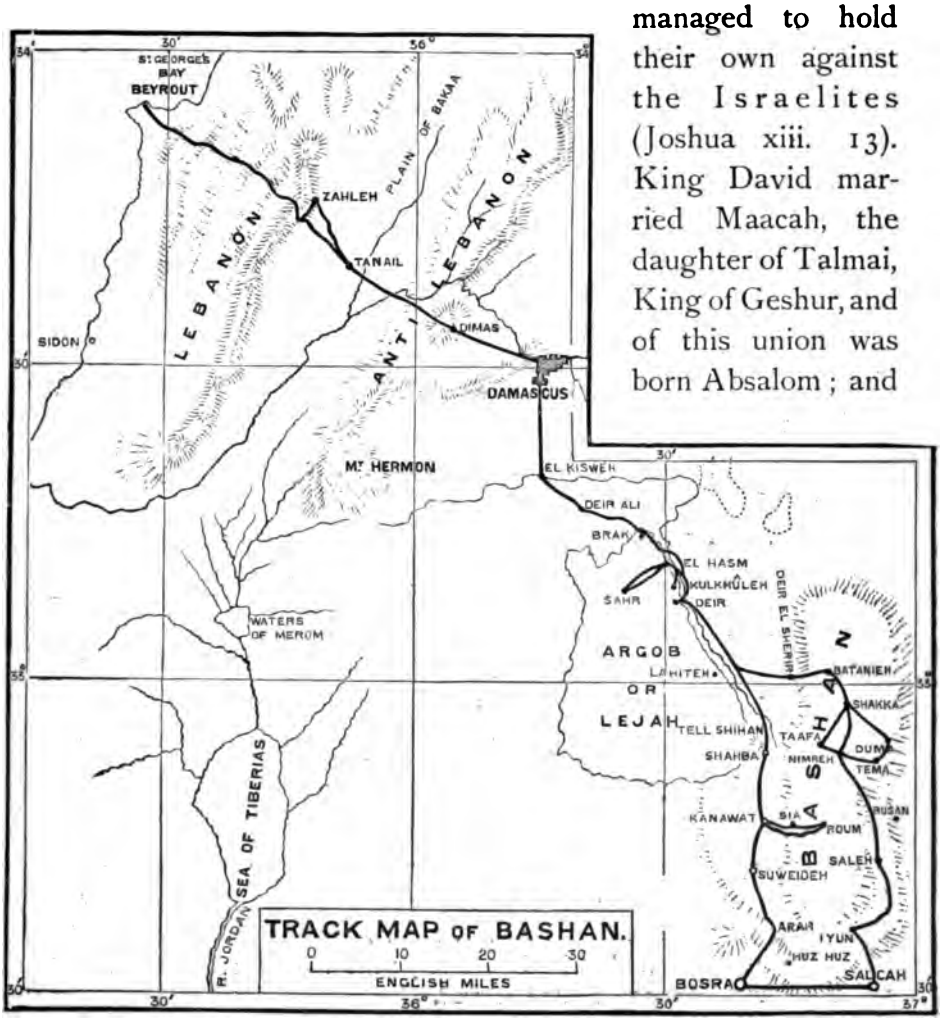


district, about twenty-five miles long by twenty-five miles across the base or further end. Solidifying, it seems to have broken up by contraction as it cooled, till the whole country resembles floe ice after a nip. Great flat cakes of lava have fallen into crevasses, like ice from under which the water has been drained. Down the slopes of these holes, pits, and abysses, the lava, though cracked into mosaic work, bending in, keeps its cake-like form; but as the depression gets greater, breaking up it has fallen in confusion, filling the cavity with its black masses piled pell-mell. A little scanty grass, and here and there a thorn bush, alone break the arid monotony of the northern part of this extraordinary tract. The southern part, that we looked over from the mountains, has scrub oak-trees growing on it. Yet in this unspeakably dreary waste are deserted towns and villages, not many inside the Lejâh, but they cluster thickly along the whole eastern ledge. Who could have thought of building a town in such an arid waste I cannot imagine.

Perhaps an artificial vegetation was encouraged in ancient times, for we noticed numerous round holes quarried out of the lava about four feet in diameter; and we were informed by the Druses that these had been cut by the ancient inhabitants to put soil into for tree-planting: indeed, in one place the holes occurred so regularly on either side of the track as to give one the idea of an avenue.

This district, called in Deuteronomy (iii. 13, 14) Argob, seems early, from its curious formation, filled as it is with

cracks, fissures and chasms, to have formed a retreat for fugitives from justice. Apparently here the Geshurites managed to hold their own against the Israelites (Joshua xiii. 13). King David married Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, King of Geshur, and of this union was born Absalom; and





after Absalom had killed Ammon it was here that he sought refuge with his grandfather Talmai (2 Sam. iii. 3, and 2 Sam. xiii. 37).

The tracks through these wastes are known only to the wildest ragamuffins of Bedouin called Es Salourh, or the Skinners, who have taken to this 'refuge,' as Lejâh means, and to some of the Druses, who have made their abode in the ancient stone cities on its edge. These Bedouin acknowledge no authority but their own sweet wills, and are unenviable neighbours to the Druses, with whom they are often at war. In 1893 I hear they had a great fight, in which the Bedouin are said, according to the Druse account, to have lost two hundred men, and the Druses half that number; but I should think this in all probability is exaggerated.

After our luggage had passed us, we left Burâk,[1] and, skirting the edge of the Lejâh, passed through plains of waving corn and cultivated land extending to the eastward as far as the eye could reach; a small quickly running river, the Wady Liwa, flowing between us and the edge of the lava, which rises twenty to thirty feet above the level of the plain. On this edge stand numerous ancient towns and villages,

[1] Burâk, of which the ancient name is unknown, was visited by Burckhardt in 1812. He copied some inscriptions, one of which shows the building on which it is inscribed to be as ancient as B.C. 304, the eighth year of the Seleucidæ. Dr. Porter described some very perfect ancient storehouses and richly-sculptured doors which he observed.







DRUSE GIRLS.

some walled, with castles, but all with stone doors and window shutters, with underground aqueducts leading to their reservoirs and wells, fed from a higher point of the Wady Liwa, and with stone-built watermills that have worked with overshot wheels. These towns and villages have been taken possession of and are now inhabited by the Druses, to whose energy the plain is indebted for its waving sea of corn. We passed some old underground cisterns of large size, excavated and walled up to a small opening at the top, forming a kind of bottle-shaped reservoir; they were in a very precarious condition—one had fallen in—and they formed dangerous traps, being close to or almost on the track.

After some little difficulty as to finding our way, or rather as to which of the dark stone-built towns was Khulkhûleh, whither our baggage had been directed, we at last got information from a Druse; and crossing the Wady Liwa (running down in full yellow flood from the recent rains) by an ancient stone bridge we entered the town of our search.

Here we were met by a Druse, who—after welcoming us and touching his breast, mouth, and head—led us up to a large stone house. Outside were sitting a number of Druses, who rose on our arrival and greeted us; and after assisting us to dismount, led us into a capacious room built entirely of stone, with stone rafters resting on arches, and covered with a flat stone roof. Acanthus leaves were carved on the walls at the side of the room, which must have been one of the principal

buildings of the ancient city. Now it is the menzûl or guest-room.

Every Druse village has its menzûl, where all travellers can find shelter, food, and accommodation, free of cost. The traveller is attended to, and the menzûl is kept clean, by the nahtour, a man appointed for the purpose, the cost being



THE MENZÛL OR GUEST-HOUSE AT KHULKHÛLEH.

defrayed by a subscription from the villagers. Arrived in this room, we were invited to take our seats on the carpets spread on the centre of the floor; and we sat on our feet, taking great care not to show the soles of our boots, which is considered most impolite. I asked the sheyk, through the dragoman, to sit down by us, but in obedience to etiquette he declined. I insisted till, after a proper amount of reluctance,

he gave way and sat on his heels beside me. In the meantime coffee-making had been in full swing, the beans had been roasted on a small iron shovel, and then ground in a mortar, the pestle making a queer rhythmical rattle of chuck, chuck, chuck-a-chuck, chuck, chuck-a-chuck, chuck, and *da capo.* Finally we each got a quarter of a tiny cupful of not very good unsweetened coffee.

Meanwhile, I had duly enquired with anxiety after my host's health, and he after mine; he had stated with apparent conviction that my excellency's propitious arrival at Khulkhûleh, heralded by the opportune running of the Wady Liwa (which after having been dry for a long time, had that day come down in flood and filled all the reservoirs), would make all things well and prosperous, including the crops.

Then I told him of my intention of visiting the Lejâh, and asked about the ruins in the neighbourhood. He told us that there were ruins at a place called Sahr, some three hours' distance into the Lejâh from El Hazm, a town to the northward of us, and that he would give us an escort there. Then thanking him, we rose, shook hands, touched our breasts and heads, and retired to our tents, where we found our servants hampered by a crowd of curious Druses, men, women, and children, all desirous to see us, our tents, and our funny ways. Some head men took pity on us, and came and cleared the lot away, only to return again at every possible opportunity. I must, however, give them the credit that beyond the annoyance of being continually watched by scores of black



and brown attentive eyes, we always found the Druses most civil and obliging.

After dinner, the sheyk called on us, and we gave him coffee, and talked over our plans. He promised to send three armed Druses with us to guide us to the ruins at Sahr, which he said were the finest inside the Lejâh. On his departure, we retired to bed, our camp watched by two Druse guards, all of us thankful that we were now well inside the Druse country.

After an early breakfast, on April 19, we mounted our horses, and with three well-armed Druses rode through Khulkhûleh, passing many stone doors and windows still used by the inhabitants; then across the river by a deepish ford, and away north through the cornfields to the adjoining village of El Hazm. Our guides were cheerful and talkative; one after much deliberate aiming shot a lark sitting, and was greatly triumphant. We saw close to El Hazm the ancient mill-house with acqueduct leading to it; the mill door still opens and shuts on its stone pivots; all is so strongly built of black stone that it has hardly suffered since its last occupants left it. Then passing over an old stone bridge we wound through the narrow streets of El Hazm, and emerged on the other side into the Lejâh.

The track (I can hardly call it more than an indication of a track) winds amongst the fissures, gaps, holes, and waves of the lava, that now extends in an undulating unbroken sheet for a few yards, and then is cracked and broken up





A GROUP OF DRUSES.

into every conceivable form. Even the semblance of a track soon faded away, and we picked our way on, now skirting a great hole into which the lava had cracked and fallen, and then sliding down a smooth and slippery sheet. One Druse scouted far out ahead of us.

After about an hour and a half of this work my wife's horse, which had lost a shoe, became so lame that she had to dismount and walk ; I dismounted and walked with her.

Our course lay about west, and we had travelled nine to twelve miles from El Hazm when suddenly we heard shouts ahead of us. The Druses closed in, and said that the Bedouin were near, but they thought that there could not be many of them, and that they would be frightened and run away ; ten minutes more and as we rounded a mass of lava, a yell resounded, and the Skinners were on us. Like dogs they ran down. As they approached they waved guns, knives, knob-sticks, and forbidding-looking battle-axes—perhaps more in bluster and for intimidation, in the hope of backsheesh, than with any murderous intent.

'Go back, go back to your own country,' they screamed ; 'this is our country, what do you want here? Kill them and take their horses, kill them and take their goods!'

The Druses advanced and endeavoured to pacify the mob, now numbering fully sixty. Old Najm went straight to the front, and talking incessantly, dismounted, though they tried to prevent him, saying that he relied on Bedouin hospitality. Following his lead I dismounted, promptly

imitated by my sons. Down trooped more howling men. With my hand out I advanced smiling, and ejaculated, *Salaam aliekoum.* To my surprise, they at once answered, *Aliekoum salaam.* My sons and I shook hands with them with the rapidity of Presidents of the American Republic. I clapped the last savage I arrived at on the shoulder, and my Arabic vocabulary being exhausted laughed at them, and told them in English, 'You are the ugliest set of savages I have ever seen.' They seemed surprised. My sons with perfect *insouciance* laughed and talked, whilst my wife kept as quiet and looked as happily amused as if the whole thing were a pantomime got up for her especial gratification. Although the crowd not immediately facing us were still waving axes and knob-sticks and shouting, those in front seemed nonplussed and said: 'What manner of men are these?' Najm by this time had got the ear of the leading man and had promised him a present; he, a repulsive-looking fellow, took our side, to the evident disgust of the younger members of the tribe, who still shouted and waved weapons, but were pushed back by him, while we continued to play the part of highly-amused spectators. Finally Najm said: 'All right! come to the ruins;' and surrounded by the mob we moved off to the fallen remains of what seemed to have been a large temple. Hardly had we left our horses in charge of Meshadi, Hadj Ali, and two Druses, when an ugly rush was made at them. A blow was struck at Hadj Ali's head with a knob-stick, which he dodged, still pluckily holding on to the horses; but



HADJ ALI.

a Bedouin seized the assailant round the arms, and screamed curses on the head of any one who touched our property or us.

I pretended to find walking difficult amongst the ruins, and leaned on the nearest Bedouin's shoulder. Two of them at once contended for the honour of assisting me. They even pointed out to us fragments of carvings and broken mouldings. The ruin was complete, conveying the idea that the whole building had been shaken to pieces by an earthquake; but our surroundings did not allow of minute observation. A scallop-shell, fragments of columns with Corinthian capitals and mouldings we saw, all of fine workmanship.

Above, and to the south-east of what we supposed to have been a temple, we came to a very well preserved amphitheatre; and the Skinners seeming quieter, I sent the Druse who was with us back to the horses for my kodak. Najm explained that I was going to take a picture with the sun. This aroused immense curiosity, and, for the time, entirely diverted the attention of these wild children of the wilderness; two were persuaded to sit in the amphitheatre opposite to us. The kodak arrived; and what with the Bedouin watching me set the focus and watching the sun to see how he was going to do it, all were so quiet that I managed to get a photograph.

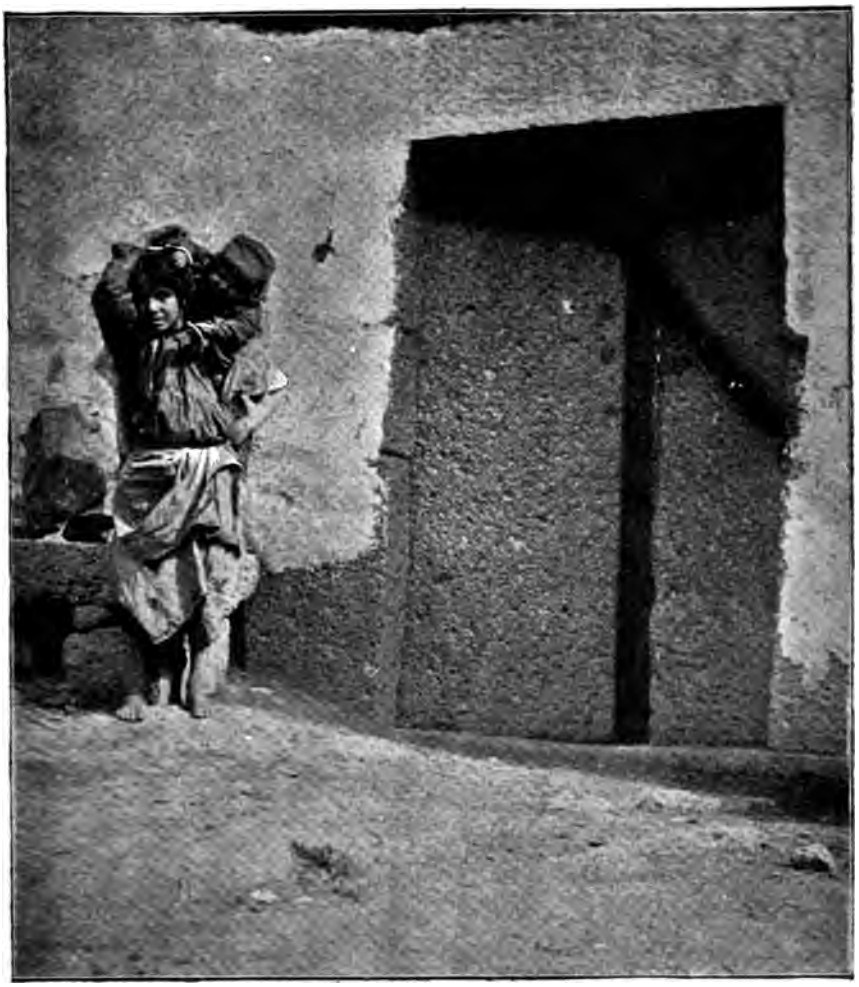
We were then conducted to their tents. On our way the horses again presented too great a temptation; this time three



horses were mounted by young Bedouin, being taken from our men as they led them behind us. An older Bedouin again helped us ; taking a stick in his two hands he broke it in half, holding it high above him, cursing anybody who touched our property, and swearing that the prophet Mohammed and he would be for ever the enemies of any one that took our goods. This was accompanied with much frantic gesticulation and waving of brown, naked arms, and tattered black abâyehs, rags, and weapons. So the horses returned, and we were ushered up to two black camel's-hair tents.

In front of one, ten or twelve girls were singing and shuffling round in a circle. In that tent, we were told, there was a wedding going on, and I was invited to give an honorarium to the bridegroom—even in the Lejâh one cannot escape wedding presents.

We were then led to the other low tent, where we squatted down near a little fire of dry camel's-dung. With immense solemnity, an old Bedouin began the rhythmical rattle of coffee-grinding with a wooden pestle in a thick, venerable-looking mortar. The noise seemed to have a soothing effect on the excited throng of tatterdemalions who squatted close round us, till, between the fire, a warm day, and the Bedouin, the heat was almost overpowering. However, we sat it out, Najm telling us to beware if we had a full cup of coffee given to us : however, all was right, and in turn we were each presented with a teaspoonful of black, bitter



ANCIENT DOUBLE STONE DOORS AT EL HAZM.



liquid at the bottom of a small dirty cup. Then we were taken outside to a large basin of boiled rice and mutton, with melted-butter poured over the top. We each took a morsel and ate it, and, returning to the tent, had water poured over our hands. After making a speech of thanks through our dragoman, and receiving a reply, we moved out to our horses.

My wife's horse was lame, so quickly shifting her saddle on to my horse, Achmed, I walking on foot, we started unmolested. One Bedouin alone followed us, which made our Druse guards obviously uneasy, and when we were well out of sight of the main party, they forcibly pushed him back. We travelled as fast as the extraordinarily difficult nature of the ground allowed, keeping a sharp look-out to our rear. In about two hours we arrived at a plateau of lava commanding an uninterrupted view, and I ordered a five minutes' halt for refreshments.

In the middle of this my eldest son and I simultaneously caught a glimpse of a following Bedouin, half a mile behind. So on we went again, my eldest son walking this time, to give me a rest. At last we sighted the Druse village of El Hazm, and our Druses now asked me to shoot the first Bedouin that made his appearance, as they said we should have lots of help directly from El Hazm, if needed. Naturally I declined to shoot unless we were attacked, which I thought was now out of the question. Another half-hour landed us in safety in the Druse village.



Here, after photographing some ancient stone doors and examining the old ruins, we re-crossed the river, and, sitting down, resumed our interrupted luncheon. Suddenly, on the other side of the bridge, appeared four of our late hosts, the Bedouin, all young men, and armed to the teeth. My eldest son was standing on the bridge, and they appeared to hesitate about advancing. Our Druses thought this was an excellent opportunity to wipe out the four; but of course this was absurd; we had eaten and drunk with them, and they had taken nothing of ours. Going up to them we chaffed them freely, Najm interpreting. They laughed, but not with such intense enjoyment as our men, who said they were only the vedette of a stronger party behind them.

As we rode back through the cornfields towards Khulkhûleh we caught a glimpse of four lean, black, tattered figures gliding through the rugged masses of broken lava back to their dreary refuge.

The Druses told us that the chief sheyk of the Bedouin whom we met was away on a raid on the other side of the Lejâh, and that though the head man of the camp was desirous of accepting blackmail for himself, and protecting us, yet our horses, clothes, and arms, had been a temptation to the younger men, especially as another camp of the same tribe was close at hand, though out of sight, from which more ruffians could have been easily summoned. On our arrival at Khulkhûleh, the sheyk said he had not thought that any Es Salourh were in that neighbourhood, but that had any-





DOORWAY, DEIR NILEH.

thing happened to us he would have sent an expedition to punish them. It was best as it was, we think.

The next morning we copied two Greek inscriptions, one outside and the other within the most northern house. The former stated that 'Theomestos and Gautos his brother, a legionary aide-de-camp, made the tomb;' the second was an elegiac epitaph beginning, 'Here by craft of the strong envy seized him who was prominent in all graces, and unwilling . . . '

Afterwards we rode on towards Shuhba, our road running along the eastern side of the Wady Liwa, and in an hour's time we reached the village of Deir Nileh, usually known as Deir. Here there are some good arches with carvings, fine stone doors and windows, and many houses. All those in the best repair are inhabited by the Druses, but the really large ones are partially demolished. We were impressed with the idea that this exceedingly fine strong stonework must have been broken up by earthquakes; it appeared impossible that the hand of man could have thrown these solid buildings into ruins. The lower houses with two stories seem to have been less affected by the destructive cause; there you find the stairs outside, the double stone doors, and window shutters, still turning easily on their pivots, let into holes in the sills of the lintels. The windows themselves are formed of a single stone, frequently carved in a lineal pattern, with holes bored through the interstices of the lines large enough to admit light and air, and too small to admit



intruders. Inside some of the rooms were stone cupboards. The upper floors of stone are laid on stone rafters supported on a series of arches. The roofs are formed in the same way. Many houses are still almost in the state in which they were abandoned centuries ago. We found three figures carved on one of the walls, apparently Palmyrene work, and an inscription, 'Tannelos, son of Gaphalos.'

After hunting round the town, and taking photographs, we departed. The sheyk with great courtesy insisted on preceding us to show us the way, notwithstanding my continual ejaculations of, 'Return, O sheyk,' as is duly prescribed by etiquette. Outside the town he stopped, wished us farewell, and tried to kiss my hand, which I drew away, saying, 'Astagfir ullah' (God forbid), and we parted.

Our track still continued through cornfields, the Lejâh with towns and villages on its edge extending on our right. Now and then as we crossed a ridge of stony ground the crops ceased for awhile, and flocks of black goats and cattle grazed with their attendant Bedouin shepherds. These Bedouin outside the eastern edge of the Lejâh are quite distinct from the ragamuffins of the Es Salourh, and are friends with the Druses, for whom they frequently act as shepherds. Further on, we saw twenty or thirty Druses ploughing with yokes of black oxen, the donkeys they had ridden out from their villages feeding hobbled near. From what I could see and learn of the system of agriculture here, it is to plough the ground, and to leave half fallow while the



DEIR NILEH.



other half grows a grain crop. The Druses go out to plough in strong parties of fifty or sixty, all armed in case of a ghazu of Bedouin, and as they have frequently some distance to go, ride their donkeys. Does not this curiously illustrate the passage in Job: 'And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee'? Then comes the news of the fire having killed the shepherds and the sheep on the pastures; and then of the Chaldeans in three bands surrounding and carrying off the camels from the feeding grounds; just as the Bedouin now would carry off, if they could, the Druses' oxen, asses, and camels, but would not probably meddle with the slow-travelling sheep, who would only die if overdriven, and whose tardy movements would undoubtedly give great facility for their being followed and recaptured, with reprisals of an unpleasant nature.

We passed the villages of El Hadr and Lahiteh, and after a long ride stopped for lunch not far from Matuni. Many Druses came up whilst we were at luncheon, amongst others a relative of the Sheyk of Khulkhûleh, who is one of the El Atrash, the most powerful family in the Jebel-Haurân. This man brought with him his son, a good-looking young fellow of about twenty, who was on crutches from the effects of a bad wound from a shot that had passed completely through the knee-cap. The father asked me to prescribe for him.



I told him that I was no hakkim, but that if he would take his son to Damascus, I would write a letter to the English Consul and ask him to get his son advice; he gratefully accepted, and I scrawled a pencil note to Mr. Eyres, telling him that we were all well, and asking him to be good enough to get surgical advice for the young fellow. On our return to Damascus, I heard that he had presented my letter, and had been sent to the best surgeon in the city, who had written to Mr. Eyres to say that an operation would be necessary, and on this being communicated to the young man and his father, they said nothing at the time, but came straight back to the Jebel-Haurân, partly, I imagine, from dread of the operation, and partly from the religious dislike the Druses have to let their flesh be cut.

As we rode on we approached a tall conical hill, called Tell Shîhân, with a 'kourbah wely' or 'grave of a slave' (of God) on its summit; and as we neared it we found it to be the cone of an extinct volcano; its slopes and the country adjoining were covered with black scoriæ and devoid of vegetation. The sun striking on the black ashes greatly increased the temperature. From this crater issued the greater part of the flowing mass of lava that now forms the Lejâh. Of the date when the eruption took place there appears no conjecture; no historical accounts that I am aware of record this great convulsion that covered so large a part of the fertile Haurânitic plain with desolation. The time must have been long prior to the age when the stone



GATEWAY, SHUHBA, SHOWING TELL SHÎHÂN ON LEFT.



buildings were commenced, built of squared stones, with stone rafters, doors, windows and roofs.

The employment of this material, for which wood is used in every other part of the world, appears to me to indicate (notwithstanding the frequent allusions to the oaks of Bashan) difficulty in obtaining suitable timber. At the present time there is no timber fit for building on the Jebel-Haurân, though in some parts there is an abundance of scrub oak.

After the original erection of these cities, an age of great prosperity seems to have ensued. Carving, decoration, and architectural embellishment became general, and lasted for a considerable period. Then a great earthquake appears to have shattered the larger and loftier buildings. Public edifices, theatres, and churches transformed from old heathen temples, have been shaken to their foundations, the roofs and upper stories crashing through the lower floors; in some places whole streets have been laid low, looking in their ruin like furrows in a ploughed field.

A period of rebuilding followed. Stones used in the old edifices were re-used in repairing and reconstructing the dwelling-houses. You see now inscriptions built into walls upside down, carved and decorated stones curtailed to fit into their new positions. The style of architecture is the same as in the earlier time. Stone is used for all purposes; but the wealth, and with it the power of erecting and decorating large public and private buildings, has left the country.



Then, probably at the time of the invasion of the Arab Mohammedan hordes, under Kalid and Abu Ubeida, the country was again devastated, and the Christian inhabitants were killed or driven from their land. At that point in the history the curtain falls. The sites of Canatha, of Salcah, of Philippopolis, and of Saccæa are forgotten, nay even their very names fall into oblivion. The black basalt buildings stand, doors and windows hang motionless on their pivots; but, with the exception of a passing tribe of Bedouin, the land once covered with thickly-peopled towns and villages, with smiling cornfields and vineyards, is deserted, neglected, and forgotten.

Centuries pass, until in our own day an incursion of another race arrives on the scene. Out of the mountain ranges of Carmel, Hermon and the Lebanon muster by degrees the descendants of the old Phœnicians. Mountaineers, strong well-made men, of a warlike race, they wrest the right of pasturage from the Bedouin, and enter in and dwell in the old cities. The stone doors again open and shut on their pivots, and the old walls again re-echo the voices of women and children. The vigorous Druse turns up the soil, rich from its own nature, and from its long sabbath; and again the fields begin to wave with corn, vineyards are replanted, the stone walls dividing the ancient fields are rebuilt, and the land is re-peopled with a warlike race, each man working with his plough or with his sickle, his gun slung on his back, and his large crooked knife ready at his girdle.



A GROUP OF DRUSES.

The Padishah's government next turns its attention to this land, till now abandoned to the Bedouin, and observing the rapid improvement under the Druses of a country nominally under its rule, attempts to collect taxes. This proceeding being resisted by the Druses, unfortunately leads to trouble. It is much to be hoped that the intention which I have heard attributed to the present Sultan of dealing with this difficult question by fairness, and not by force, is correct.

After passing Tell Shîhân we crossed the Wady Liwa, here called Wady Nimreh, and ascending the rocky path on the other side, arrived at the entering in of Shuhba, 'as thou comest from the west.' It is a strong walled town. The gateway, consisting of one large central arch, and one arch on either side, is still in fair preservation. Looking back, the broad ancient road running straight away out from the gate is easily discernible. Once inside the gate—the central arch of which measures 15 feet 5 inches across, and the two side arches 11 feet and 10 feet 9 inches respectively—we emerged into the wide-paved main street of Shuhba, 56 feet across. The houses which lined either side of the street are heaped in ruinous confusion; but the line of the street ending in another that cuts across it at right angles is plainly to be seen. We continued our way, slightly inclining to the right, and came to the wall of a large building still standing, and just beyond it to the more perfect ruins of the theatre, the exterior walls of which are nearly intact. The stage and orchestra and the tiers of seats still remain

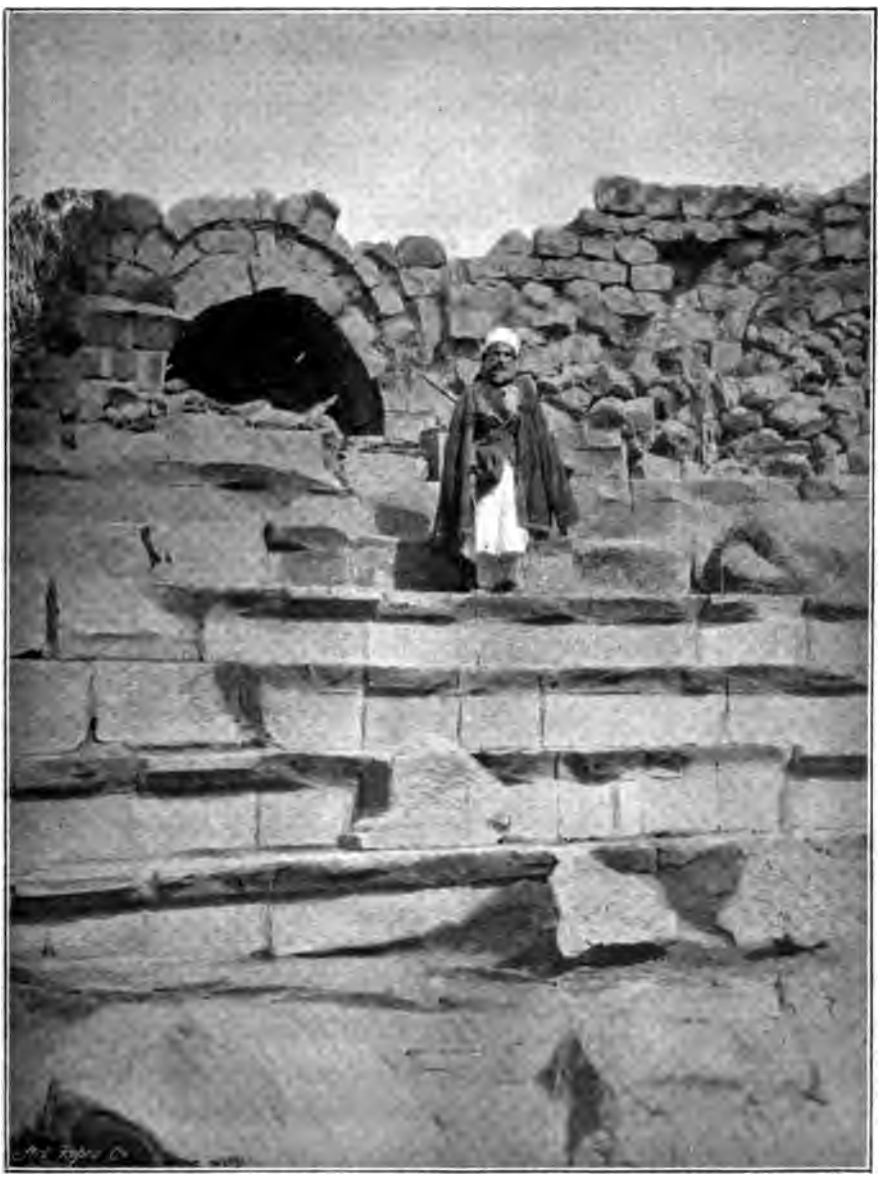


untouched by time, together with the passage opening out by seven arched doors into a corridor running three parts round the building, that gave access to the spectators.

Below the theatre we found our camp pitched, as usual surrounded by a crowd of curious and inquisitive Druses. They all rose respectfully, and greeted us with a courteous *Naharac said* (Good-day), which we answer with *Naharac mubarek* (A holy day); and again the chief men advanced, and gave me the customary hand-grip.

The convulsion that destroyed Shuhba must have been terrific. In many parts of the town, which is of considerable dimensions, stone seems to have been hurled from stone with titanic force; streets of stone houses lie in ranks of heaped-up ruins. Columns, capitals, and carvings lie strewn in every direction. Near the centre of the ruins on a raised stone platform stand three Corinthian columns that have withstood the overthrow; they appear to have formed part of the exterior of a temple. The large building that we first noticed has a semicircular end with niches on either side for statues. We found three gates, one to the north-west, which we entered by, one to the east, and one to the south; both the latter similar in character to the one I have already described. Many old coins were offered us here, dug up by the Druses among the ruins—they were mostly Roman and Greek—but many were quite undecipherable.

Our dog, as we called him, though he was really the property of one of the muleteers, has become quite attached



THE THEATRE, SHUHBA.



to the camp, and knows every one, man or beast, that belongs to it. He rejoices in the name of Barud, and he travels sometimes with us, and sometimes with the baggage animals, as the fancy takes him. *En route*, to enliven the monotony of the journey, he will run and scare the sheep or goats, but he does not bite them; he especially delights in giving an ox or a donkey a bad fright by coming suddenly upon it and barking. This amusement, varied by fighting, and I must say almost invariably beating, every dog he meets on the way, constitutes Barud's diversion for the march. Arriving in camp rather fatigued, he sleeps soundly till sunset; he then systematically goes round the camp, barking once or twice, to inform those whom it may concern that he is on the look-out. After that till sunrise he is on the *qui vive;* anything stirring in the vicinity, whether man, woman, cat, or dog, is immediately flown at with a sharp warning bark. He, however, takes no notice of the guards hired at each place to watch the camp by night; but having committed their smell to memory, thenceforward looks on them as belonging to the party. He is well fed by the servants, who appreciate his active look-out; and as he has plenty of frightful combats, to judge by the noise, he leads a happy and contented life. In his moments of repose his bland expression leads one to suppose that he is at peace with the world. Should we remain two nights at the same camp, I notice that on the second night Barud takes a much larger portion of ground round our camp as belonging to us, and



being therefore under his jurisdiction. I imagine that this enlargement of our borders commends itself to his mind, as it ensures greater certainty that the stray pariah cannot steal behind a tent and sneak certain delicacies thrown away by the cook, that are especially Barud's perquisites. He is pleasant and cheerful with all who belong to the camp, and enjoys being patted and talked to, but he is under nobody's orders, and is apparently stone deaf to any one calling him, unless he chooses to hear. Nevertheless, his own rule of life, and daily or rather nightly duties—laws apparently evolved out of his inner consciousness—are rigorously adhered to: no strangers to be permitted in his jurisdiction between dusk and dawn, and no canine member of his own sex to be passed without seeing who is the better dog.

The morning after our arrival at Shuhba, whilst our baggage animals were being packed, we rode all round the ruins again.[1] In the building with the semicircular end we found two stone armchairs. On the eastern side of the town

[1] Shuhba is said to be the old Philippopolis, one of the cities of the Decapolis. But the identification with the ancient Philippopolis is more than doubtful. The Emperor Philip was a native of Bostra; and some authorities say he gave his own name to Bostra (or Bosra). The ruins and inscriptions of Shuhba have been explored and described both by Burckhardt and Porter at considerable length. Some identify it with the Dionysias of the Notitia. It is remarkable that none of its ruins, extensive as they are, bear traces of the early period of the Haurân. Inscriptions do not carry us further back than A.D. 161; but this is forty years earlier than the Emperor Philip Arab. Philippopolis is probably represented by Orman, where Burckhardt found an inscription with the name, and the date 353, *i.e.* A.D. 359.



RUINS OF BATHS AND AQUEDUCT AT SHUHBA.



are considerable remains of a large aqueduct constructed on arches some fifty feet high, and near it the walls of a large building that may have been a bath. Near the centre of the town, over a doorway below the level of the ground, we copied a Greek inscription, which is a dedication made on behalf of the safety and victory of the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, A.D. 177.

Passing down the paved street leading to the southern gate, we emerged from the town, and saw the line of the old straight, still partly paved, road running away up the hill between stone walls towards Kanawât, the ancient Kenath; Josephus calls it Kenatha.

Riding by the side of the old paved way up the mountain, we noticed that the country had been terraced for vines in the ancient times; but only those terraced plateaux that are large enough to make it worth while to plough them for a corn crop are now under cultivation by the Druses. The huge piles of stone that have been gathered off the land, the walls of the terraces, and the walls dividing the plots, and on either side of the old road, clearly show how carefully this land was cultivated in the past.

Ascending continually, we arrived at last at a valley stretching across our path, and descended to the stream that runs westward at the bottom. There we halted for luncheon. Two young Druses joined us, and after finding out from the guides whom we had taken from Khulkhûleh who we were, and that all was right, dismounted. After some conversation



they asked to see my rifle, and then wished to see me shoot with it; so thinking it not a bad thing for them to see that we can hit if we do shoot, I made them put up a mark of small size at about a hundred and fifty yards, a distance quite beyond the powers of their weapons, and struck it fairly, to their great astonishment. The crack of the rifle had not ceased to echo amongst the mountains before a shrill hail came from the summit of one of the near hills, asking what the shooting was about. Reassured by the Druses, the owner of the voice descended; and then nothing would do but that he must see the mark shot at again.





KANAWÂT.



CHAPTER II.

KANAWÂT AND SIAH.

ROUND a circular hill we proceeded, descending into another valley through which ran a stream, both sides of which were cultivated. On passing a curious square tower, we arrived at a picturesque stone bridge spanning a small river, which just above us ran in rapids and clear whirling pools through a rocky gorge. The edge of the water on our side was green and fresh, with silver poplars and vines; and the small terraced fields were irrigated by little watercourses, fed by the stream higher up. Through the trees we caught glimpses of a lovely little temple.[1] Across the water the steep side of the ravine is built over with the walls and houses, one above the other, of the ancient town of Kanawât, the Kenath Nobah of the Bible: 'And Nobah went and took Kenath, and the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name' (Num. xxxii. 42). 'And Segub begat Jair, who had three and twenty cities in the land of Gilead. And he took

[1] This temple, dedicated to the sun, is a fine specimen of the Corinthian style.

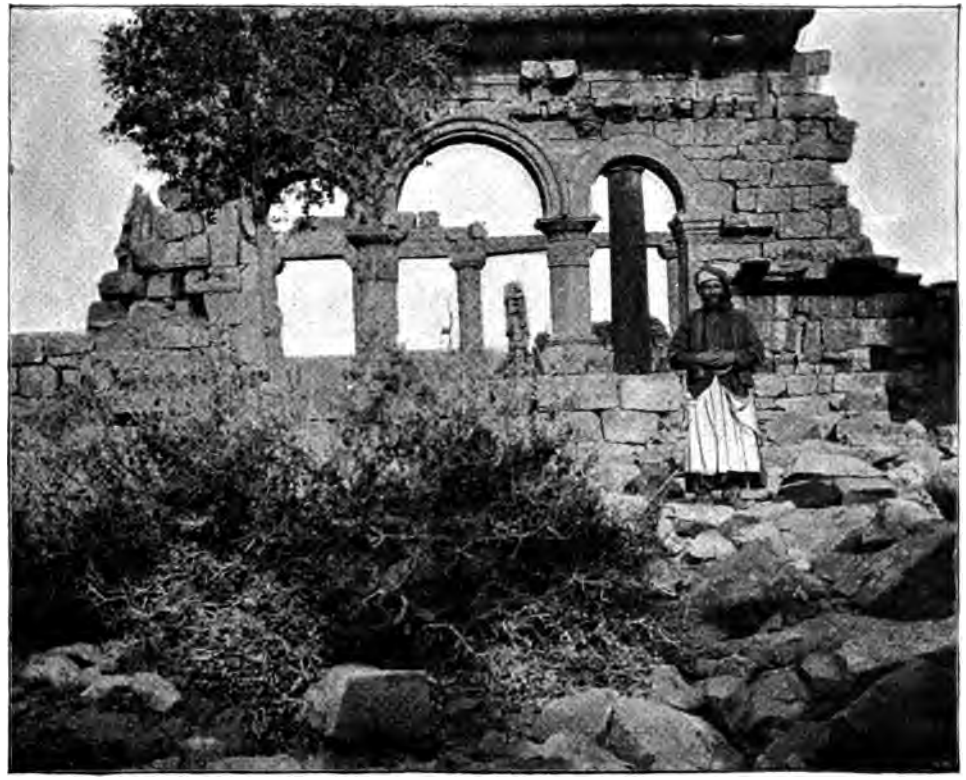


Geshur, and Aram, with the towns of Jair, from them, with Kenath, and the towns thereof, even threescore cities' (1 Chron. ii. 22, 23).

Crossing the bridge we rode through the old streets—all the best houses are now inhabited by Druses—and found our camp pitched in a charming place just outside the town. A lovely view of the columns of a ruined temple lay in the foreground, whilst beyond we could see right over the Haurân and Jaulân, Lake Mezarib looking like a faint silver thread in the distance, and the snows of Hermon like a fleecy cloud in the sky near the western horizon. 'Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion, and the Amorites call it Shenir' (Deut. iii. 9), and the Druses call it Jebel Shir.

The usual crowd, by whom we were most civilly greeted, were collected round our camp. After we had taken tea we sallied out, accompanied by one of our Khulkhûleh guards, to see the town. The temple is built on a raised platform of masonry, in which are chambers; on this platform stands a double row of Corinthian columns, which seem to have formed a portico. On the section of a fallen column, so placed that it must have been covered by the section above or below it (if not inscribed since the column fell), we found carved in Greek letters, 'O Rufinus.'

The walls of the little fields are full of fragments of capitals, carvings, and sculptured figures. From here we walked to what the Druses call the serai or palace. We entered a very large area paved with flat oblong stones.



ARCHED OPENING, LOOKING OUT ON COLONNADE, AT THE PALACE, KANAWÂT.



This paved court extended on two sides of the palace; on one side a broken stone watercourse still conducts a quickly-running stream of water through the court. The building itself seems to have consisted of three portions, the main building and a large temple, the two connected by a colonnade. The main building has its windows and doorway richly decorated. Large single stones form the tops of doorways and windows, over which are relieving arches to take the weight of the superstructure. Ascending the steps through the doorway, we found that the whole of the upper floors had fallen in and were piled in a ruinous mass on the basement.

In the right-hand wall is a curious small room decorated with rough-coloured patterns on plaster, and blackened in places by oil-lamps. This, our Druse informed us, was the Kourbah Eyub—the Tomb of Job—and that it was a very holy place; the blackening by oil-lamps having taken place on the occasions when they treat the patriarch to an illumination.

Crossing the débris we got into the colonnade that runs down the left side of the serai and opens out on to the paved court with the watercourse. Walking down it we came to a large building having a portico of Corinthian columns that stands somewhat back from the line of the colonnade. Here, entering, we found that an interior line of columns had once run round the room at a distance of eleven feet from the walls. The capitals of these columns are plain squares, except the two centre ones at each end, which are Corinthian. The



front wall has fallen; there is an arched recess in the right-hand wall. A magnificently carved doorway opens out into another large room; on the lower part of the lintel of this doorway crosses are carved, but the cutting is neither so deep nor so good as the rest of the decoration; they appear to be of a later date. Passing through this doorway we faced the great arched door at the other end of the building which has been walled up; an interior line of columns runs round this hall, with the purpose of supporting an upper floor or perhaps a gallery round it. Whatever has been its original purpose, it has been used as a Christian church, as is indicated by the crosses cut over the original decoration.

Leaving these grand ruins we went on towards the remains of a temple that stands on the highest ground, and has been reached by a broad flight of steps. On our left was the town wall; and below the temple and beneath the level of the ground was a succession of arches that supported the top of a very large underground reservoir, that had been fed by an aqueduct led from the river. Ascending the flight of steps to the raised platform with Corinthian columns that forms the portico, we entered the upper temple. Though smaller in form, it recalls the temple of Jupiter at Baalbek. The superstructure above the doorway inside the portico has crashed down through the upper lintel, filling up the entrance with a mass of ruins, but the upper pivot holes remain and show the well-worn marks where the huge doors swung. On the right-hand side is a small staircase, and a passage in the



RUINS AT KANAWÂT, SHOWING COLONNADE.



thickness of the wall; the original wall at the further end has fallen, but has been rebuilt with the old materials to continue the circumvallation of the town, on the edge of which the temple stands.

We were greatly helped by some intelligent Druse boys in hunting for inscriptions and sculptures, and copied the following in Greek.

No. 1. 'The tomb was built by Sados, son of Chaalos (?), with his own money for Agrippinus.'

No. 2. 'Chaamenos, son of Gairelos, built the tomb out of pity with his own money.'

No. 3. 'Klaudios, son of Sanamos, built the tomb.'

The boys also showed us a very large lion-like face of a man boldly carved; unfortunately it was so placed in the wall of a garden as to defy our efforts to photograph it.

Outside the walls stands a square mausoleum tower, but the roof has fallen in, leaving nothing but the outer shell standing.

On our return to camp we received a visit from Sheyk Hassan el Hadjereh, who is the principal Sheyk Harkul or the priest of the Druses. He was dressed in black flowing robes, with a voluminous white turban round the red Druse cap. Three or four Druses in dark clothes accompanied him. He approached our tents with slow, stately steps, amidst murmurs from the people near, 'The sheyk is coming,' as they made way for him. I met him outside, and after shaking hands and giving and receiving the usual greetings,



invited him inside our dining-tent. As head of the initiated he is not allowed to drink coffee or smoke, so I had lemonade brought in for him; and we engaged in the usual highflown compliments. 'He was delighted that my presence should shed its benignant rays on Kanawât' Dragoman's English, 'He say he very glad you come make all shine Kanawât;' and I, 'rejoiced at having the opportunity of making the acquaintance of the learned Sheyk Harkul of the Druses.' Then came guarded efforts to find out my reasons for visiting the Jebel-Haurân. I assured him my object was purely to know more about the Druses and their country, and also to study the ancient ruins and inscriptions. Sheyk Hassan kindly gave me a letter stating that I was visiting the country with the express permission of the vali, and recommending me to the care of all good Druses generally. I presented the sheyk with a watch, which seemed to please him, and after giving me a courteous invitation to call on him at his own house he took his leave. I found it difficult to persuade the Druses that I had no other object in view than seeing the country and ruins. I think there is a latent idea that no sane man would undertake the journey, unless he were persuaded that by reading the old inscriptions and by the help of other Western magic, he might find vast treasures hidden by the ancients. Nationally, I find that we are great favourites with the Druses, a common method of expressing it being to hold the forefingers of both hands side by side, saying, 'The Ingliz and Druses are alike as the forefingers of the two hands.'



CARVED DOORWAY, SERAI, KANAWÂT.

Next day being Sunday we rested, and as I found that there were some ruins called Siah and Roum within a ride of this place, we decided to let our camp remain here Monday also. In the afternoon we paid our return visit to Sheyk Hassan, and I found him ready to receive us at the menzûl, a large stone, arched room. We entered by a step, and a couple of yards in arrived at a second step about eight inches high, below which the Druses left their shoes, and which formed the level of the rest of the room. Here the mats and carpets were spread, leaving a small space in the centre for a little fire where coffee was usually prepared. We went through the usual forms and speeches, attentively listened to by the male Druses, who crowded into the menzûl. Squatting on their heels in a circle round us, they formed a picturesque scene with their red caps and white turbans, and their flowing robes of different colours; they were armed to the teeth with guns and knives, battle-axes and knob-sticks; their bandoliers of cartridges hung round their shoulders; and their eyes, heavily blackened with kohl, gleamed out through the cool shade of the half-darkened room. A low murmur of approval went round the room at the end of each of the speeches. Then we were offered sugared almonds and raisins, but no coffee could of course be offered us by a Sheyk Harkul. Afterwards my wife went to visit the sheyk's wife, whom she described as pretty, with nice manners, and by whom she was well received; but conversation was unfortunately limited, as of course our dragoman could not be present to interpret.



I should mention that the commencement of this grave visit was somewhat marred by the uninvited presence in the menzûl of a donkey, which, finding the door left open after the carpets had been spread for our reception, had quietly walked in to enjoy the delightful coolness of the shade, and being discovered at the moment of our entry, was hustled out with such energy that Sheyk Hassan was as nearly as possible knocked down by it in its exit. I fear I heard a faint gurgle of laughter amongst the grave initiated.

On taking leave of Sheyk Hassan we walked down to the bridge we had crossed on our arrival, and passing through the narrow winding streets, saw many examples of stone doors and windows. We found another menzûl with a raised flagged terrace in front of it, approached by a flight of steps. Thence we descended to the river, which we crossed by stepping-stones, and got into the poplar groves on the other side. Hidden by the trees and the luxuriance of vegetation caused by the irrigating rills, we discovered the prettiest imaginable little theatre, partly built and partly cut out of the rock, with a fountain in the centre; its orchestra and tiers of seats in good preservation. A short distance further on we found a bath-house, the water still rising in the bath itself, though now surrounded with weeds and water grasses, and tenanted by clamorous frogs. The sun had left this side of the ravine, and the trees, the water, the vegetation, and the lovely little theatre made the most delightful picture, assisted materially in its impression of coolness by the deliciously



A MAUSOLEUM.

satisfying sound of a chorus of frogs. A scene thoroughly appreciated by us who had emerged from the glare of a hot Syrian afternoon sun.

We rested here, and then climbed up the side of the



FRAGMENT OF CARVING, SIAH.

ravine. Aided by the wreck of an old flight of steps, we came to the ruin of a strongly built tower; a good panelled stone door lies near it. From the top of the tower we had a fine view over Kanawât, the poplars, the rocky ravine, and



brawling stream, the odd confusion of stone houses built almost perpendicularly one above another, and the narrow paths cut in the opposite side of the cliff. A string of camels walked quietly along, quite unattended, to their own stables, looking as if they were walking on the tops of the houses. The brilliant colours of the cloths spread to winnow the grain on the roof of the ancient mill; the long white veils of the women, with the bright rose and canary-coloured yellow of their skirts; the red caps and white turbans of the men,—all blended in the picture. The cry of 'Ta! ta! ta!' to the black goats coming home shepherded by pretty children, rose from their feeding-ground. Everything united to make this scene very enchanting.

What a happy, prosperous country this would be, could it be assured of peace and security! But the apparent peacefulness of the impression was jarred by the sight of the arsenal of weapons carried by every man, the very boys having their knob-sticks and sharpened hard-wood stakes.

We walked back along the top of the cliff, re-crossed the bridge and returned to camp; and as we sat at dinner with the tent door thrown wide open we looked over the wide stretch of plain below us, bathed in the crimson rays of the setting sun.[1]

The next day we were told the Kanawât men objected

[1] Porter, *Five Years in Damascus*, gives a very accurate ground plan of the ruins of Kanawât, as well as a detached description of the ruins, most of which are of an early, probably Seleucid, type.



ARCHES COVERING GREAT RESERVOIR, KANAWÂT.



to our having Khulkhûleh guards, saying that it was their right to guard us themselves in their own district. So our two friends from Khulkhûleh were sent back with presents and every show of goodwill on both sides. With our new guards we started early for the ruins of Siah, that are near a branch of the stream that runs past the town of Kanawât. Our track roughly followed this stream, till we came to a spur of the mountain projecting boldly out into the broad valley through which the wady runs. We climbed this spur as far as possible with our horses, and dismounting and leaving them, finished the rest of the ascent on foot.

Arriving at the top, we found an ornamental gateway, with many remains of sculptured and squared stones lying pell-mell about. Entering, we found ourselves in the confused ruins of what must have been a much ornamented temple or palace, the walls of which have been built to include the whole space of the summit of the end of the spur.[1] There is a large paved court in the centre, and everywhere lie heaped fragments of sculptures of eagles, of horses, of a key pattern moulding, of garlands of flowers, and of capitals of Corinthian, Ionic, and Doric columns with their shafts, shattered inscriptions, and large building stones; they all lie heaped in inextricable confusion.

[1] The temple of Siah was dedicated to Baal Sarmin, and is one of the finest in the Haurân. It was built by Herod the Great; it is extremely probable that the carving at Siah was executed by some of the same men who decorated the temple at Jerusalem.



We spent some hours examining these ruins, and came to the conclusion that we were standing on the site of some gorgeous temple, shaken to pieces by a convulsion of Nature. The Druses say that it was pulled down by Bedouin; but that they should have taken the immense trouble and labour to demolish so strong and solid a building seems to me absurd. Can this idea have originated from the tradition of the Arab hordes under Mohammed's generals having desolated the whole country?

Leaving Siah, we continued to ascend the valley, travelling on an easterly course. Heaps of stones gathered off the land testify to its having been all under cultivation. We crossed some large water-meadows, whose tumble-down walls still mark the boundaries of the old occupiers; and so we followed the general course of the stream upwards, till we came to what at first seemed to be heaps of rough stones; and we were told that this was Roum.

On riding up, we found that we had come to ruins of a totally different sort from any that we had yet seen. We were standing in the middle of a village built almost entirely of rough unhewn stones. The thresholds, jambs, and lintels of the doorways and the stone rafters are roughly hewn; but the walls and arches that have supported the rafters are built of rough, large stones, similar to those which you see collected in heaps, or still strewn over the land. The doors have been stone, as evidenced by the large pivot holes on the lintels, but we found none *in situ*. We saw no windows;



CARVED SIDE OF GATEWAY, SIAH.



only one small piece of key pattern decoration, similar to that at Siah, and which may have been brought from there; and one small fragment of a shaft of a column. We think these ruins are those of a village of peasants; all the houses seem to have consisted solely of rooms on the ground-floor.



ARCH OF ANCIENT STONE DWELLING, ROUM.

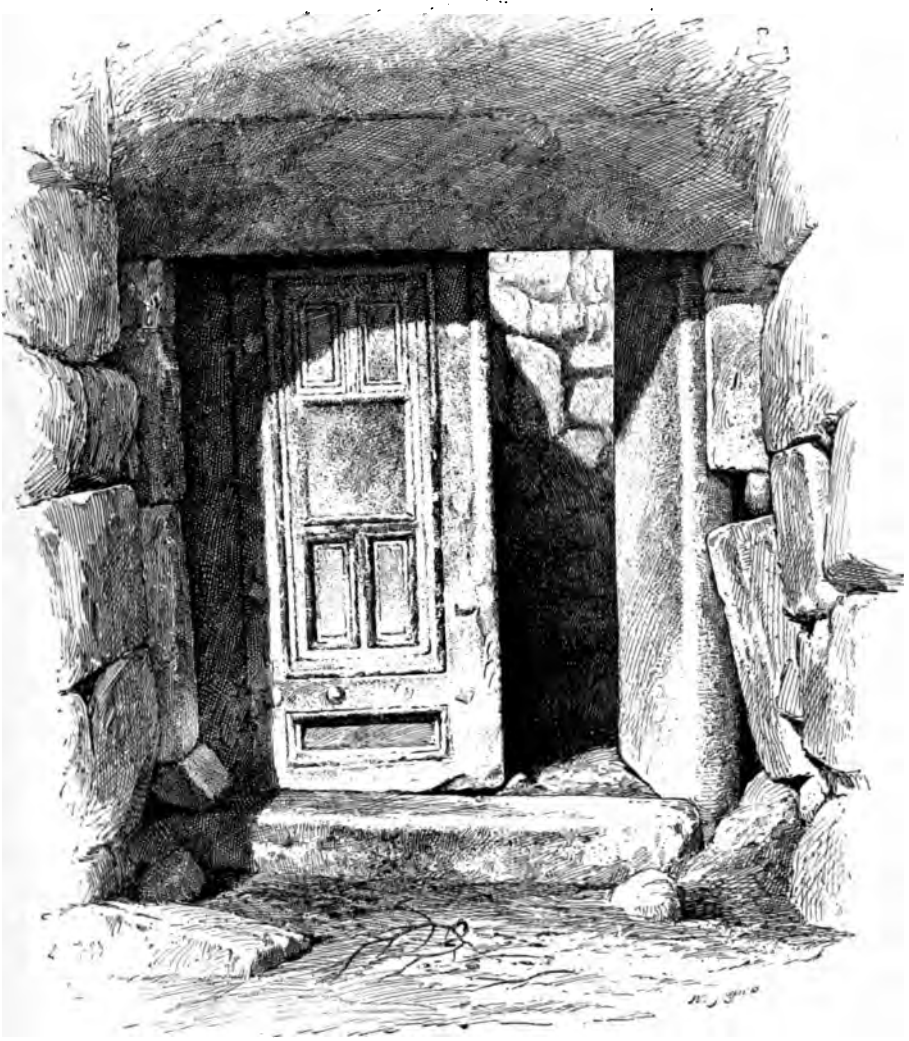
In one place we found the wreck of what may have been a small shrine; it was here we found the fragment of the column. The demolition of this village seems to have been purely the work of time; the low buildings were probably unaffected by the convulsion that hurled the stately temple of Siah to the ground; but little by little the rough stone walls, at first

plastered up, and the interstices made good with clay, have slipped from their places, the rafters have given way, and the roofs have fallen in; many of the arches, however, still remain perfect. Riding back, we halted by an old scrubby oak-tree for luncheon, and then returned to camp. On the way we passed several ruined towers, of certainly two different periods of construction, some of rough unhewn stones, and apparently very ancient, the others of squared stones, seemingly of a later date.

The next day, whilst the baggage was getting away, I got some photographs by the morning light that I had not been able to take before; and I found another fine panelled stone door in one of the houses facing the ravine. Kanawât must have been a very beautiful town; the number of ruins of public buildings show that it was an important centre. 'Kenath and the towns thereof' seems to indicate this. This town has now a considerable population of Druses.



H



PANELLED STONE DOOR AT KANAWÂT.

CHAPTER III.

SUWEIDEH.

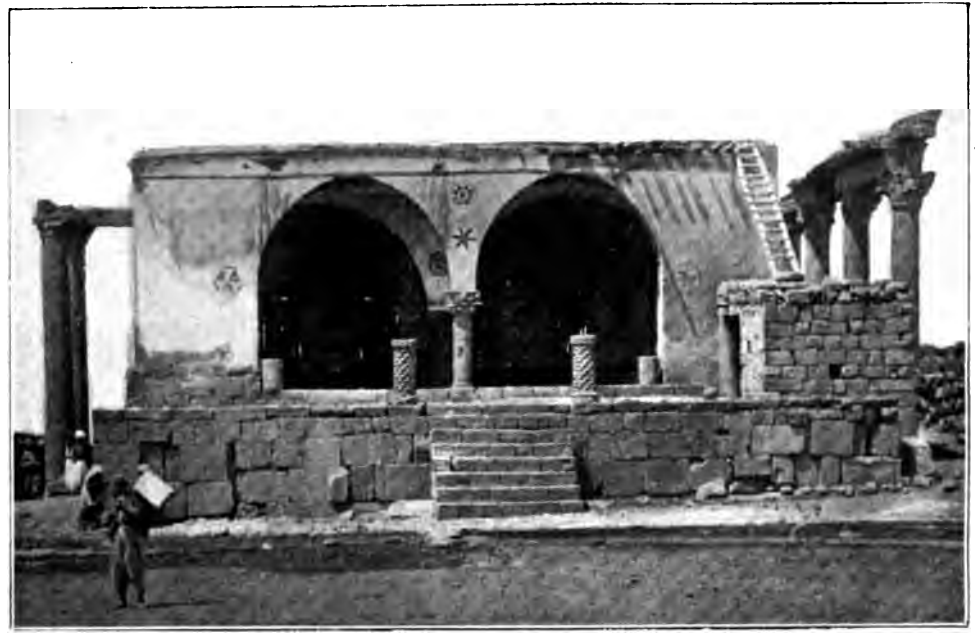
LEAVING Kanawât, our track to Suweideh led us through a well-cultivated and well-watered country. There were many vineyards, with the old walls, ten or twelve feet high, rebuilt, encircling them, and many of the ruined towers that I have mentioned before. Fruit trees and poplars grew near the water, whilst higher up the mountain scrub oaks covered the hill-side. After about three hours we came in sight of the square Turkish barracks built above and dominating the town of Suweideh. Going down towards the stream which, spanned by an old bridge, ran between us and the town, we saw on our right the mausoleum described by Count de Vogué, a square building apparently solid, the efforts of the Druses to get inside it in search of treasure having been entirely futile. The sides are decorated by six Doric half columns, and between the columns are carved shields, breast-plates, and helmets. On the northern side is, or was, for we could not find it, a Greek inscription which, according to

De Vogué, states that 'Odainathos, son of Annelos, built this monument to Chamrate, his wife.'[1]

Crossing the single-arch bridge over the stream, we rode up the paved road into Suweideh, and sent the baggage on to Arah with orders to camp there, much to the muleteers' disgust, who had hoped to have stopped there. This little difference of opinion was promptly settled by Najm, though not without much gesticulation. Hardly had we entered the town before a mounted messenger arrived post-haste with a civil message from the kaimakhan, begging us to wait, that he might have the pleasure of seeing us. Our baggage had by this time got well on, so we were shown to the menzûl; and I photographed the temple with its portico of Corinthian columns, and some curious carvings lying near the menzûl which some Druses very civilly moved into the sunlight to enable me to take.

Presently the kaimakhan arrived, and to my very great surprise answered my question if he could converse in French by, 'Yes; or in English also, if you prefer.' He was most civil, and after coffee had been duly presented he introduced us to the Druse sheyks and notabilities, who, he informed us, had come to him for protection, also to two nice-looking

[1] Burckhardt and Porter have copied many inscriptions at Suweideh, some very curious, as of merchant companies, 'The Alexandrian Firm of Fishmongers,' etc. The dates of some buildings can be exactly ascertained by the inscriptions, one A.D. 171, another A.D. 196, another of Trajan A.D. 103. There is a very large Christian church. But nowhere do we find a clue to the name of the place.



TEMPLE NOW USED AS A MENZÛL, SUWEIDEH.



Druse boys of good family about ten or twelve years old; they were well-dressed, and had revolvers in their belts. The kaimakhan kissed them, and explained that they were to be sent to Constantinople to be educated. A young Druse was also presented to us who, having been in America, spoke English easily. Then we proceeded to what appears to have been the old temple, repaired to form a kind of meeting-house; one side is open to the square, and a divan runs round the other three. Here Najm and Meshadi, assisted by the grooms Ramadan and Hadj Ali, had spread luncheon; and chairs, or rather stools, having been provided, we sat down.

To my delight, I found that the kaimakhan, Youssuf Zia Alkhalidy, of Jerusalem, is an educated man, and that he was for some time Professor of Arabic at the schools at Vienna. He greatly lamented the impossibility of getting books or newspapers at Suweideh; and he much enjoyed a good talk over current events. I noticed, though he did not unpleasantly obtrude the fact, that our occupation of Egypt was not at all to his taste. Ten or fifteen Druses and a few zaptiehs sat on the divan on the other side of the room, all ears to hear what was going on, but, as the conversation was in English and French, unable to understand a word.

After luncheon the kaimakhan asked my wife if she would like to honour a Druse lady of rank with a visit; and on her saying that she would much like to do so, he sent for the Druse who spoke English (he being a relative of the lady), and ordered him to escort her. She told me that she



was taken to a doorway leading into a stone-paved courtyard, where she was met by two unveiled Nubian women, who, walking on either side of her, conducted her to a flight of stone steps. There, at the top of them, she was met by a number of veiled Druse women, who accompanied her into a large room. The young Druse who spoke English followed. Three steps led on to a raised floor covered with handsome carpets and red and yellow cushions.

The Druse sheyk's widow was sitting veiled at the far end of the room, which, besides carpets and cushions, was only furnished with wooden chests of Damascus work, inlaid with mother-of-pearl. She rose to meet my wife as she entered, and taking her by both hands salaamed very low, and led her up to the end of the room, the other women stopping below the step. My wife, refusing a chair that was sent for, sat on the cushion at the Druse lady's side. After the usual compliments she was much questioned about English politics and the Queen; whether my wife had seen her and spoken to her. She seemed to know all about us, where we had been, and what we had done, and expressed much surprise that my wife was not afraid to trust herself with the Druses, though she said that we were perfectly safe with them. She expressed pleasure that my wife had come to visit her, and said that she had hoped she would, as she had heard that we had all mixed freely with the Druses. As she became interested, she unveiled: she was a woman between forty and fifty years of age with a very intelligent face, and was

dressed in dark drapery and a white gauze veil. Coffee, raisins, and sugared almonds were then handed round. She accompanied my wife to the door on her leaving with much ceremony, and endeavoured to kiss her hand, which she withdrew; then she wished her good-bye, and my wife was escorted out of the house by the other women.

Meanwhile, the kaimakhan had very kindly presented me with a book of which he is the author, and had written my name in what to European ideas appeared to be the wrong end of it. He pressed me hard to stop at Suweideh for the night, but our tents and luggage having gone on to Arah, I had to decline. He also told me that it was most dangerous to travel without an escort, that the east side of Jebel-Druse was most unsafe, and that we must take three zaptiehs with us, as absolutely necessary for our safety. We thanked the kaimakhan, and wishing him good-bye, rode off, followed by our escort.

The track took us through an undulating and cultivated country, and in an hour and a half we arrived at our camp at Arah—possibly the Ariath of the Notitia. Our tents were as usual surrounded by Druses. We found that the great Druse sheyk, Shibleh Bey, had sent presents of sheep and barley for us; and we had not long arrived before the sheyk himself with a strong body-guard of armed men came to our camp to pay us a visit. He is a big stout man, with quiet, courteous, gentleman-like manners. He sat and drank coffee, and talked with us for some time, and expressed his



hope that we had everywhere been well received by the Druses. We assured him that we had met with nothing but the greatest civility from them. He said we should find that to be the case wherever we honoured the Druses by entrusting ourselves to their care; he also told me that I might send back the zaptiehs to Suweideh, and that he would give us two of his own horsemen to take us on. He thought the Lejâh was unsafe unless with a very large body of Druses as an escort, and that even then there might be a fight with the Bedouin. He said he was very glad that we had the good fortune to get off so easily, but he thought that the Sheyk of Khulkhûleh should not have risked our passage with so slender an escort, even though he believed that we should meet with no Bedouin.

Before leaving, he asked us to visit him in the evening, which we promised to do. After he had gone, we found he had left a freshly shot gazelle as a present for us, and had also sent down another sheep for the zaptiehs, and barley for their horses. Shibleh el Atrash Bey is the son of Soumaine el Atrash, who was made Pasha over all the Druse country by the Sultan. At his father's death he was made Kaimakhan of the Druses; his brother Mahmoud is sheyk at Salcah; a younger brother Halel lives with Shibleh at Arah.

After dinner we walked up, accompanied by a couple of men, to pay our return visit at the bey's strong new house. The dwelling part is surrounded by a wall, outside of which is the reception-room. This is entered from a square yard

surrounded by a low stone wall. His bodyguard of from sixty to seventy men, armed with Remington rifles, their bandoliers crammed full of cartridges, were in the yard, or sitting on the low wall. They rose and greeted us. Going straight on, we entered the reception-room, a long oblong building, arched and spanned over with stone rafters and roof. About four yards in from the doorway there is the usual step on to the raised floor, but along this step runs a wooden balustrade extending from the walls on either side, not meeting in the centre, but leaving an opening about ten feet wide, like the rails before a communion table. A low dais about four inches high runs round the walls of the raised floor. This was covered with carpets and cushions, and the rest of the floor with grass mats. Against the wall at the far end hung by its sling was Shibleh Bey's rifle. The room was lit by a single hanging petroleum lamp, and a brass pedestal, with a cup-shaped top filled with oil with lighted wicks hanging out of it, stood in the centre. Nearer the door was a fire where four cooks were busily engaged preparing food in large brass caldrons, from time to time blowing up the embers with an inflated sheep- or goat-skin, which had a wooden pipe fixed in at one end, forming a kind of bellows.

Hardly had we had time to observe our surroundings, before Shibleh Bey entered, and he conducted us to a seat on the cushions at the upper end of the room. One of the cooks brought out a large wooden mortar, and the regular

rattle of coffee-grinding began. The usual complimentary speeches then commenced, during which the lesser sheyks began to arrive, and sat round the room, but at some distance



FRONT OF ALTAR, ARAH.

from us. We saw at the entrance the men having water poured over their hands before eating. A Druse entered, and salaaming low to Shibleh, kissed his hand and pressed it to his forehead; he was dismissed with a few words. The

cooks had now finished their labours, and the caldrons of meat were carried outside. Through the arched doorway we saw the crowd of white turbaned Druses squatting round, and putting brown hands into great dishes of food, spread out in the brilliantly moonlit yard, flashes of light glancing from their arms and accoutrements. After coffee I thanked Shibleh for his hospitality, and for the presents he had sent us. He smiled, and replied, 'What is that between me and thee?' and then I made him the present of a pair of binocular-glasses, for which he thanked me.

Leaning over and taking my hand, he entered into a long conversation with me through Najm, and gave me much information as to the country. He ordered a curious stone altar to be brought in for us to see, with bulls carved on it, and an inscription in an (to me) unknown character on one side. As we admired it, he offered to give it me, and to send it on a camel to Damascus. Feeling that this would be taxing his hospitality too much, I declined with many thanks, but asked leave to photograph it the next day, to which he willingly acceded. Then shaking hands, and wishing our kind host good-night, we rose, or in my case endeavoured to rise, for having sat for an hour and a half most carefully on my feet, my left foot had lost all feeling, and I very nearly fell, but a quick helping hand from my eldest son got me over the crisis. We departed through the midst of Shibleh Bey's white-turbaned, kohl-eyed, wild-looking guard, and descending the steps of the courtyard found a lantern

and an escort of armed men waiting to accompany us to camp. There we arrived, enchanted with our evening, having had the opportunity of seeing a Druse chieftain at home, surrounded by all his wild feudal state and etiquette,



BACK OF ALTAR.

and charmed by our host's quiet, graceful, gentleman-like manners.

The following morning I sent the escort of zaptiehs back to Suweideh with a present to each of them and a letter to the kaimakhan thanking him for his kindness and courtesy in sending them. After breakfast we walked to Shibleh's

house to photograph the altar and to take a squeeze of the inscription. Shibleh told me that he thought the altar had been used for the Israelite calf-worship. Then mounting our horses we bade him good-bye, and rode on with two men whom he had sent well armed and mounted.

CHAPTER IV.

BOSRA.

THE road from Arah gradually descends towards the plain till nearing Bosra. We crossed an ancient stone bridge over a stream close to the ruins of the village of Ismareen,



STONE BRIDGE AT ISMAREEN.

probably once a suburb of Eski Sham, or Old Damascus, as Bosra is still called. The houses at Ismareen seem to have been those of rich people, probably attracted to the spot by



DRUSE GIRLS.



the running water so essential to the pleasure of an Oriental, and making anything possible in the way of gardening. Above one of the doors is a carved cross enclosed in a circle followed by the Greek word, 'of Felix.' These ruins are inhabited by a few miserable-looking Arabs, who did not appear to be very friendly.

A short canter brought us to Bosra. As we wound through the narrow streets we saw ruins of churches, temples, towers, columns, and houses on either hand. We found our camp pitched near the Turkish fort that has been constructed out of the old castle.

Bosra must have been a town of very great importance. Situated as it is at the southern end of Jebel-Haurân, it must have been always a point of great strategical value in securing the safety of the country to the west of it against the raids of the Arab hordes. The extent and size of its ruins attest its ancient magnificence. It was a walled city of quadrilateral form, bisected by a long street, extending from the western gate, which is in good preservation, to the eastern. This street is crossed at right angles by another; and these two appear to have been the principal streets. At the point where they cut each other are the ruins of a temple with three Corinthian columns standing in front of it on marble pedestals. Nearly opposite, on the other side of the street, are four Corinthian columns. Turning down the main street towards the western gate, we passed some large buildings and an arch, erected over a side street that turns to our left.

There are one central and two side arches, with niches for statues between; and on the central one is a Latin inscription in honour of Julius Julianus, prefect of the first Parthian Legion, by Trebicius Gaudinus. From here down to the western gate the houses on either side of the street are simply a mass of ruins; but the gate itself and a small portion of the wall near it are in fair preservation. The double arches of the single gateway have supported the floor of a room above; the floor has fallen through, but its arched roof still remains.

From this point we clambered over the ruins to the north-eastward, steering for a small square tower; on reaching it and swinging back the door we ascended the winding flight of steps. About twenty feet above is a window with a stone shutter; but higher up the steps began to look so dangerous and broken that we ventured no further. Close by is a house or rather a large room with a perfect stone door, window shutters, and cupboards; and in the side of the room facing the door is a curious semicircular niche finished above by a carved scallop shell; it gives one the idea of a fireplace without a chimney. Here is a good example of a perforated stone window; unfortunately its position made it impossible to photograph. All doors and shutters, some plain, some carved in panels, are made on the same principle, the doors varying from eleven to seven inches in thickness, according to their height and width. The stone pivots are made of the same block as the threshold and lintel, and the doors and windows are so hung that notwithstanding



WESTERN GATE, BOSRA.



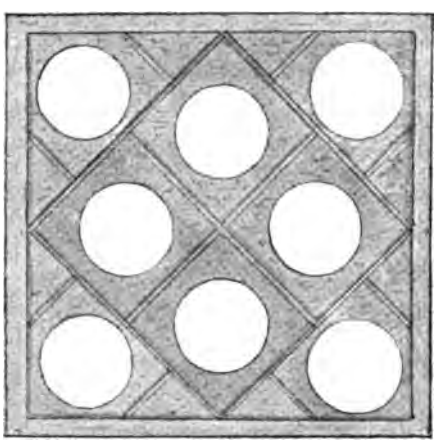
the centuries that must have elapsed since they were put up many still swing easily. Holes in the door and in the jamb where the handle and the lock would be, show there was an arrangement for fastening the door, probably made of metal,



COLUMNS AT BOSRA.

which was of value to the wandering Bedouin ; all traces of these locks have disappeared. In one or two instances we observed that the pivots of stone doors having become worn from long use, stone rings had been cut and put round the worn pivot. Some doors and gates are double.

Twenty yards from the tower is another old house with a tree near it and some remains of columns; this is now inhabited by a holy man, who has constituted himself the custodian of a little shrine he has erected to St. George, for reasons unknown—possibly because it was the only saint's name he could remember. Who would clamber over these



STONE WINDOW, BOSRA.

ruins to see this shrine and pay a *sahtoot* ($\frac{1}{8}d.$) or two for the privilege, it is difficult to imagine. However, we visited it, in hope of finding inscriptions or carvings in the old house, but saw none. We got a drink of cool water from the Arab lady who lives with his holiness; glanced at the shrine, which reposes behind a dirty curtain in a dark room with a little oil lamp, and departed, leaving the old man blessing the liber-

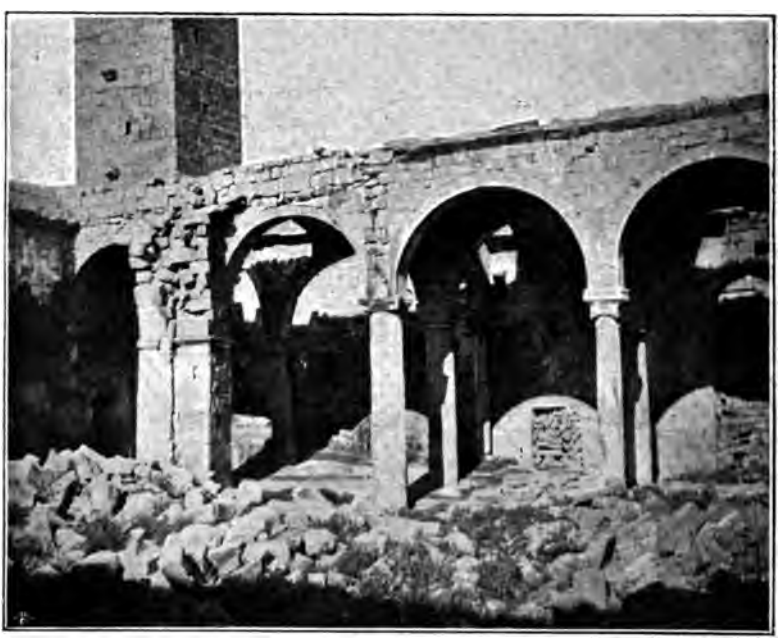


GENERAL VIEW OF THE RUINS, BOSRA.



ality, or perhaps, who knows? the asinine stupidity of the Ingleez who had given him the unheard-of backsheesh of a whole *bishlik* (5½*d.*).

Passing a reservoir where Bedouin were watering their



GREAT TEMPLE, BOSRA.

goats, we scrambled to the great temple or church that has been used for a mosque.[1] It has a tall tower close to it. One

[1] Most probably this is one of the earliest mosques in existence, built in the time of the Khalif Omar, from the materials of a great Christian church, as may be seen from inscriptions on the columns, which are evidently not in their original position.



side of the building has a double row of columns; on two sides are single rows. Most of the capitals are Corinthian, two are Ionic. Two marble columns have Greek inscriptions, of the period when the building was used as a Christian church: one commences, 'In the name of Christ the Saviour;' the other bears the date of 383, *i.e.* A.D. 489.

We ascended the tower, the stories above being in perfect order, and from thence had a lovely view all over Bosra. We then walked through some old streets in a much better state of preservation, most of the houses being inhabited by Mohammedans. Passing an old bazaar, we came to a large ruin of another church, and from here turned to the castle, a very large building surrounded by a moat and flanked by towers. A drawbridge leads to a gateway; the door through which you enter the castle is covered with iron. In the centre is the site of an old theatre, but the interior has been much pulled about to accommodate the Turkish troops quartered there. As we passed the gate a Turkish soldier saluted, and said, 'How do you do, sir? I speak Ingleez.' I tried to find out how he learnt it and where; but he had arrived at the end of his knowledge of our language, and we left him proudly conscious before his comrades of the fact that he had spoken Ingleez.

We then returned to camp. The sheyk of the town called on us, and began to cross-question me about our future movements. As it was certainly no affair of his, I told him that as I was travelling for pleasure I should travel by that



TOWER AND HOUSE, BOSRA.

road which pleased me most. After some conversation he left with salaams, promising to send guards for the night. The guards never arrived; so thinking it possible that the sheyk might have some little game on, I directed Najm to tell the muleteers to watch the tents for the night, they of course



HOUSE AT BOSRA, WITH OUTSIDE STAIRCASE.

receiving the usual guards' pay. After dinner I went the rounds, and, as I expected, found the guards taking alternate sucks at a hubble-bubble under the lee of the cook's tent; a re-arrangement ensued. Three sentries were given a beat sixty yards out from the tent. Our Druse guides slept on



one side of the camp, and the relief guard of muleteers on the other.

By dint of continually visiting the sentries I secured a good look-out. About a quarter to one we had an alarm; our dog Barud dashed out barking fiercely. I hurried to that side of the camp, promptly backed by Hamed, a Turkish muleteer, armed with a pole with an iron spike at the end of it. Our people turned up, and whoever it was disappeared. The moon rising soon after, we had no further alarms. My eldest son relieved me at half-past two, and at daylight we packed, breakfasted, and started baggage and all for Salcah; and struck the line of the long paved road that runs straight as an arrow from Bosra to Og's ancient border city (Deut. iii. 10).





FORTRESS OF SALCAH, FROM THE SOUTH.

CHAPTER V.

SALCAH.

THE road leads through a plain gently rising towards Salcah. It was in such a state that we could not ride upon it, and, as usual, we had to find our way along its side. We passed some ruins of large buildings and a reservoir, from which a lovely snow-white egret rose and settled on the walls. Here we were in the Druse country again. So leaving our luggage with one Druse guard, we cantered on with the other, the high conical hill of Salcah straight in front of us and some ten miles distant.

On our left we saw the villages of Huz-Huz (the land of Uz ?), Hebron, Kureiyeh, and Nimreh, all inhabited by Druses. The country became less cultivated, though now and then we saw parties of armed men ploughing with their little black oxen, the asses feeding by them. Our guide was eagerly questioned, 'Who are these?' 'What is the news?' etc., etc. We passed a band of Bedouin watching a large herd of camels feeding. The ascent now became steeper, and the castle of Salcah appeared more distinctly, and we



saw that what we had taken to be a scarp of solid rock was a mass of monster masonry.

Partly ascending the hill we turned sharply to the right, and arrived at the town of Salcah. Selecting a level field of grass outside the town for our camp, we waited for our baggage. Luncheon being over, and no tents having arrived, I sent a messenger to enquire, who returned with the news that the camp was pitched on the other side of the village near a reservoir. As this was not a healthy site, I sent orders that the camp was to come to me; when the cook, who was responsible for pitching the camp, replied that the Druses would not allow him to move. This was too palpable a lie, so mounting my horse I cantered down. The cook, pale with terror, ran to seek protection from the tent ropes, and in two minutes waiter, grooms, muleteers, and cook were tumbling over each other in their hurry to strike the tents, and move to the place I had selected. In half-an-hour they were there, and I had no more trouble the whole of the trip with any of the servants; indeed, the cook surpassed himself with his dinner that night, though, only to do him justice, his cooking was always excellent.

We afterwards rode up the hill through the town of Salcah. Above the town we came to a well-defined moat encircling the base of the conical volcanic hill on which the fortress is built. Crossing this with great difficulty, we let our horses scramble up the steep slope covered with cinders and scoriæ; and reaching the top of the hill looked down



WALL OF SALCAH, RISING FROM CENTRE OF THE CRATER.



into the crater of the old volcano. From the centre rose the massive walls of the castle that towered above our heads, the crater round the outer wall forming a second deep fosse. On the city side a bridge led over this fosse into the fortress; but the arch has given way and the bridge has fallen. The lower courses of hewn stones visible slope inwards towards the castle to a height of about 30 ft. Above this the walls rise perpendicularly. We scrambled in by an old entrance opposite the broken bridge, and entered an arched passage that turns to the left. The inner wall of this passage seems to have been at some period the outer wall of the fortress; and the passage, with others above and below it, forming galleries that run round the castle, seem to have been added outside the ancient walls. Fallen from an archway is a stone carved with the figure of a bird with outstretched wings, and some fragments of statues lie near. But this side of the castle has been seriously injured by the Druses having used it as an excellent and convenient quarry of ready hewn and squared stones for repairing their houses on the hill-side below.

For some hours we scrambled through the rooms, galleries, and dark passages. The living-rooms seem to have been in the centre. We tried hard to find a way down to the chambers that must exist in the basement, but the destruction wrought by the Druses, and the accumulated rubbish, prevented our reaching them. The upper part of the outer wall has an Arabic inscription round it; lions are carved on it, and a palm-tree stands between them.



The obviously extreme age of the inner part of the fortress, and its unique position, built in the centre of the crater of a volcano, assure one that this castle must have existed from the most remote antiquity. Og was king over the whole country, 'unto Salcah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan.' Josephus says Og was King of Gilead and Gaulanitis, and that the inhabitants 'exceeded in riches all the men in that part of the continent, on account of the goodness of the soil,'—its richness is still very apparent. And in Joshua xii. 4, 5, we read of 'the coast of Og King of Bashan, which was of the remnant of the Rephaim, that dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, and reigned in Mount Hermon, and in Salcah, and in all Bashan.'

Standing here, we thought of the time when all the inhabitants of this country went out to resist the invading hordes of Israel, and meeting them at Edrei were utterly routed. It will be remembered how they carried back the dead form of their giant king to Rabbath of the children of Ammon, where they were safe from pursuit, the Israelites having been expressly forbidden to meddle with the land of the children of Ammon; and there they buried him. 'Behold his coffin was a coffin of black basalt [the Bedouin still call black basalt, iron, from its metallic ring]; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? Nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it after the cubit of a man.'

When the land was divided amongst the Israelites, 'all

Bashan' fell to the lot of the half-tribe of Manasseh. But in 1 Chron. v. 11, we read that 'the children of Gad dwelt over against them (the Reubenites), in the land of Bashan unto Salcah.' However this was, there appears to be no question that Og the King of Bashan's kingdom extended as far south as Wady Zerkâ, the ancient River Jabbok. Josephus expressly states that Sihon's Amorite kingdom was a 'country situate between three rivers, and naturally resembling an island, the Arnon (Wady Enkeileh) being its southern limit; the River Jabbok determining its northern side, which running into Jordan loses its own name and takes the other; while Jordan itself runs along by it on its western coast.' Therefore, as Bashan was the adjoining kingdom, Jabbok was their mutual frontier. Again Josephus says: 'So Moses passed over the River Jabbok, and overran the kingdom of Og.' In Joshua xiii. 16, Reuben's inheritance is described as 'from Aroer, that is on the back of the River Arnon.' Gad's inheritance is then described as being further north; and beyond them again the half-tribe of Manasseh, including half the family of Machir, the son of Manasseh by his concubine the Aramitess. It is therefore confusing to read what Mesha, King of Moab, wrote, in the reign of Jehoram, King of Israel, on the celebrated Moabite stone: 'The men of Gad dwelt in the country of Ataroth from ancient times;' or in Numbers xxxii. 34, 'The children of Gad built Dibon, and Ataroth, and Aroer.' Dibon and Aroer are on the south, and Ataroth in the centre of what apparently was the territory of Reuben.



The explanation, I think, is that these trans-Jordanic tribes being pastoral held the land more or less in commor between them, extending gradually eastwards till they reached the entering in of the wilderness from the River Euphrates to find pasture for their multiplying herds of cattle (1 Chron. v. 9), until the Assyrian military adventurer Pul, or Pulu, who took the name of Tiglath Pileser III., carried them away 'unto Halah, and Harbor, and Hara, and to the River Gozan' (the Khabour) 'unto this day.'

It is more than probable that this was the fortress taken by Judas Maccabæus, or more correctly, relieved by him whilst it was being assaulted; for did not Judas remove by night from Bosra, and betimes in the morning look up and see the castle being assailed by the heathen? 'He said unto his host, Fight this day for your brethren. So he went forth behind them in three companies, who sounded their trumpets and cried with prayer. Then the host of Timotheus, knowing it was Maccabæus, fled from him, so that there were killed of them that day about eight thousand men' (1 Macc. v. 28–34).

From the top of the castle there is the most lovely and extensive view, eastward far into the desert, with its violet, pink, and blue colouring; southward, along the line of the straight road leading downward to Bosra; and northward, to the snow-flecked summits of the Jebel-Haurân.

We scrambled back over the moat and regained the lip of the crater. Here a lusty blackguard asked backsheesh, and

on my refusing thought to frighten me by seizing my horse's reins. I spurred my horse at him, and he fled. The Druses round approved, saying that he was a low, bad fellow. I mention this, as it was the only act of incivility we received while in the Druse country.

We then completed the circle round the castle, riding round the edge of the crater, and were much struck by the massiveness and height of the walls. We slipped our clever little Arab horses down the loose ashes to the first moat, their hind legs pushed so far in front of them that they almost seemed to be sitting down.

I then paid a formal visit to Mahmoud el Atrash, Sheyk of Salcah. Riding my horse through his courtyard up to his door, as etiquette requires, I dismounted, and was ushered into a large room, against the centre of one wall of which the sheyk lay propped up with pillows in his bed, which was o course on the floor. I took his hand, and said how grieved I was to see him suffering; and as he quietly turned his sunken eyes on mine, and pressed my hand, the horrible thought of the report that this illness was caused by deliberate poisoning was very painful. Poor fellow! as he lay there on his pillow, with ashen features and grizzled beard and moustache, his quiet, courteous words were translated to me: 'He regretted his inability to call on me, but hoped his people had done everything to make me welcome. His son had called at our tents, but had found us gone to the castle.'



The lesser sheyks of Salcah came in and shook hands; coffee was handed round, and then we had complimentary speeches; till, fearful of tiring the invalid, I wished him good-bye, hoping that God would relieve him of his illness. 'Inshalla' (Please God) was murmured round the room, and I was attended by his people back to my horse.

Arriving at camp I found that sheep, and barley for the horses, had been sent as a present from the sheyk during my absence. That evening, after dinner, the sheyk's son, with two armed attendants, one a Nubian, called on me; and several other sheyks came too. I gave them coffee and lemonade, and as the sheyk's son, a man about twenty, was too young to be Arkul (initiated), cigarettes. I enquired about the best ruins in the neighbourhood, and was told that the village of 'Ayun, still uninhabited, was among the most perfect. Then I made special enquiries about the reported finding at Salcah of an ancient arrangement of tripod and lever, said to throw light on the way the huge stones were moved into their places. One and all declared that it was a fable, and that no one had heard of such a thing having been found that was at all ancient; but they all said, 'That is the way we replace the stone rafters that have fallen from the houses,' and explained that they used a long lever with baskets at the other end, which they filled with stones as a counterpoise. In my own opinion, no wooden lever could be made strong enough to lift the enormous masses of stone at Baalbek, one of which has

been estimated to weigh nearly one thousand five hundred tons.[1]

Next day we started for the ruins of 'Ayun. Skirting round the eastern side of the hill of Salcah, we passed old reservoirs full of water and entered a country divided into fields by ancient walls formed by the stones collected off the land. A road with a wall on either side led directly towards 'Ayun, but as usual the road was impassable, and we had to find our way by a track alongside of it, which finally descended into some large meadows. Near the source of the spring which waters them lies the town of 'Ayun, absolutely untenanted, and at a little distance looking exactly as it was left when its last inhabitant was killed or fled from it. We rode round the walls till we found the gateway, and leaving our horses with our men, entered the town on foot.

[1] I got several old coins from the Druses here, that they had found amongst the ruins, amongst them was one that on our return home was identified, through the kindness of Sir Maunde Thompson, of the British Museum, as a copper coin of Aretas II. (Philodemos) and Chulda, King and Queen of the Nabatheans, B.C. 7--A.D. 40.

This was the Aretas whose daughter Herod Antipas married, and whom he put away for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Aretas' daughter went to Machærus, and escaped to her father, who was so incensed with the insult put upon his daughter, that he marched his forces against Herod's, and entirely defeated him. Some of the Jews of that period looked upon Herod's defeat as a punishment from God for the murder of John the Baptist, 'for all men counted John as a prophet.'

This is also that Aretas of whom St. Paul writes in 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33: 'In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.'



solitude and silence had reigned over its streets for so many centuries, unbroken save by some passing Bedouin.[1]

From here we rode in a north-easterly direction, passing many heaps of lava that must have been emitted from the volcano of Salcah, looking like miniature Lejâhs, and on through a country that had been under high cultivation. Great heaps of stones collected off the land and walls, standing in places ten feet high, attest the industry of the old inhabitants. But the walls are in sad dilapidation, tumbled purposely down, apparently to allow the Bedouin to range over this district with their animals for pasturage. All the way till close to Saleh we saw no trace of present cultivation, and only met some Bedouin with a large flock of goats, and a single Bedouin, who came to us enquiringly for some lost camels.

Crossing the head of Wady Rafil we left Abu Zurek on our right, and continued the ascent towards Saleh. There we found our camp pitched near a clear copious fountain springing out into some old decorated troughs. Some very dilapidated ruins were on the other side, the stones of which had evidently been used to build the new menzûl and the sheyk's house. The ruins of the old town are extensive, but consist of little more than foundations. We saw a Greek inscription over a stable door that runs: 'Built in memory of Gadonas and Kadamos, sons of Salienus, in the year 321,

[1] 'Ayun, *i.e.* 'Springs,' is mentioned by some previous travellers, but not described.



by Oterathe and Megaithia.' The wind was cold and keen, blowing from the 'hill of Bashan,' and we were not sorry to have a brazier burning in our dining-tent, whilst we discussed the excellent dinner provided for us by our cook, who strains himself, to use an Americanism, to please us, to make amends for his stupidity at Salcah.





OUR DRUSE GUARDS, SENT BY SHIBLEH BEY.

CHAPTER VI.

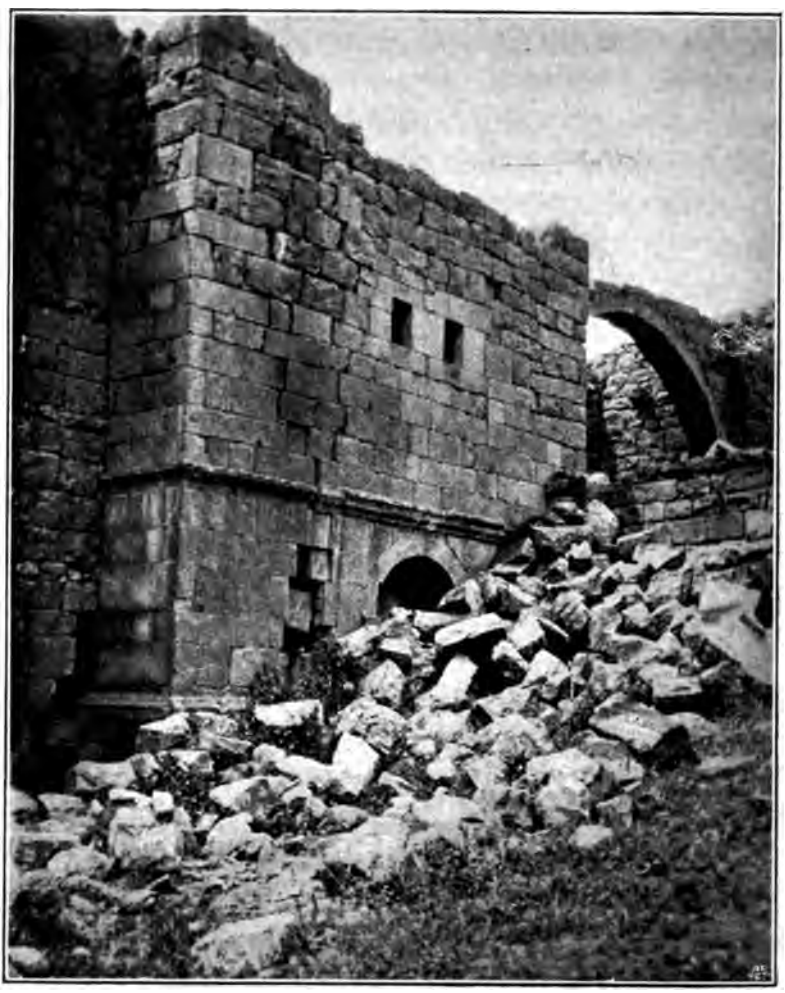
EASTERN BASHAN.

NEXT morning as usual, accompanied by one Druse guard, the other going with the baggage, we rode northward. Patches of snow lay on the hills just above us. We crossed the head of the Wady Busan, leaving the town of that name on our right hand [was this the home of Barachel the Buzite, Job's friend?], and passed some Druses ploughing with their black cattle.

How much the Book of Job loses by mistranslation, and how the poetical imagery comes out with the true words! Take for example Job xxxix. 9, commencing: 'Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee?' 'The unicorn or reem is,' says Dr. Tristram, whose authority is paramount, 'undoubtedly the urus of Cæsar, the aurochs.' That this animal did inhabit this part of Syria, is I think conclusively shown by the fact that Canon Tristram discovered four teeth in the bone breccia of the Lebanon, which were identified by Boyd Dawkins as belonging to some gigantic wild ox, no doubt the aurochs or urus. This is confirmed in a most



interesting way, as Houghton shows, by the Assyrian records. On a broken obelisk an Assyrian king (probably Tiglath Pileser I.) proclaims 'wild reemi destructive, which he slew at the foot of Lebanon.' Layard tells us that the wild bull of bas-reliefs of Nimroud is evidently a wild animal which inhabited Mesopotamia or Assyria. Its form is too faithfully delineated to admit of the supposition that it was an antelope. It is distinguished from the domestic ox by a number of small marks covering the body, and probably intended to denote the long and shaggy hair. There is reason to believe the aurochs became early extinct in the regions about the Holy Land. The mention of it as a familiar animal ceases in the Bible after the time of David. (*Animals of the Bible*, by H. Chichester Hart.) Isaiah, however, writes: 'The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. And the unicorns (reemi) shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness' (Isaiah xxxiv. 6, 7). Thus associating the aurochs with the oxen as suitable for sacrifice. And in the *Speaker's Commentary* (note on Numbers xxiii.): 'The animal named by Balaam as an apt symbol of the strength of Israel is now extinct, and is the *Bos primigenus* of naturalists, the aurochs of the old Germans, the urus of Cæsar, who gives a formidable



RUINS OF DEIR NIMREH.



account of its size, speed, and ferocity' (*De Bello Gallico*, iv. 29). As the aurochs became extinct, the name was gradually transferred to a smaller, but still mighty, species, the *Bison bonasus* or *Bos urus*, which yet lingers in Lithuania, and I hope also in the Caucasus. I have shot it in Lithuania,[1] and it is now called there the zubr. The passage in Job xxxix. 9–12 should read: 'Will the aurochs be willing to serve thee, or abide in thy crib? Canst thou bind the aurochs with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the land after thee? Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?' Thus the writer compares the wild aurochs with the tame ox. And in Deut. xxxiii. 17: 'His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of *an unicorn*.' The marginal *an* unicorn is correct (not unicorns), demonstrating that a two-horned animal is referred to (H. C. Hart's *Animals of the Bible*).

On our way we came to a plateau on the hills, and passed a large lake on our right-hand side, called by the Druses Mathoneel. It was about a mile across, but rocks and stones showing above the water all over it proved that it was very shallow. Our guard told us that it dried completely up in the summer. We followed the course down of the Wady Hanish, and passed an ancient square watch-tower, two others standing out boldly on the summits of the hills on our

[1] See Badminton Library. *Big Game Shooting.* Vol. ii. pp. 65, 167.

left. Lower down an artificial watercourse leads along the slopes of the hills to the village of Nimreh. We crossed the valley and stopped at the ruins of Deir Nimreh, or the Convent of Nimreh, on the opposite side of the wady to the village.

The convent is built against the side of a rocky hill, which has been quarried out to receive it. The walls are of



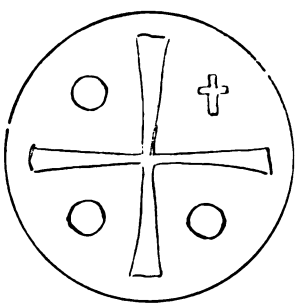
DOOR, DEIR NIMREH.

smooth finely-dressed stones. A moulding runs round the building above the second course of stones from the ground. The doorway has a round medallion carved above it, with a sort of Jerusalem cross on it. The interior has fallen in. The windows have double stone shutters; in one case I noticed that there were holes in the stones forming the sides of the windows, outside the shutters, as if for iron bars; the shutters opened inwards.

Since the erection of Deir Nimreh, a stone building of much inferior workmanship has been built against it on the lower side, which partly covers a well-carved Greek inscription that reads as follows :

'† Blessed be the Lord; Areos, son of Amer, a priest, and . . . a deacon, built the tomb in remembrance of Amer and Bada (boelus) priests.'

The later building has been of two stories. Half a mile



Medallion over Door
Deir Nimreh

below us we saw another tower-like ruin on the same side of the ravine as ourselves.

The wind blew strong, and we were glad of the shelter of the convent whilst we ate our luncheon. Afterwards ascending the hill behind we struck due north to Shakka, and soon came in sight of it. Four white dots near it indicated that our baggage had arrived and our tents were pitched. We passed between a large arch on our right and



a building of considerable size on our left, where the principal Druses of Shakka rose and greeted us, raising their hands to their hearts, lips, and foreheads, with many *Naharac Saids.* Close by we found our camp surrounded by an inquisitive crowd. We personally were treated with the greatest courtesy and civility, the men keeping the children away from our tents; indeed, one of them apologised for their inquisitiveness, saying that the children had never seen Europeans before. I replied that should any of the Druses visit me in England in their national dress, I should have quite as much trouble with the curiosity of English children. But they were not so civil to my servants, who are mostly Maronites; indeed, I hear our cook was greatly insulted. Whilst busy with his culinary duties, he was inconvenienced by the crowding of an inquisitive group of men and children, and at last expostulated freely, when a tall Druse exclaimed, 'Keep back, O Druses! what have you come to see, a Christian not worth two paras cooking a chicken?' At which the Druses kept back, laughing, but Cyrus our cook was greatly incensed.

We walked up to the menzûl, where we had coffee and the usual formalities; the Sheyk of Shakka did not appear to us to have the usual authority, nor to be shown quite the usual respect. I enquired about the ruins, and was told that the most interesting were three days' journey out in the desert; but as this I was assured necessitated engaging the services of the Sheyk of Shakka and a guard of twenty

of his men, we judged it better to see the Druse country thoroughly than go further afield, especially as the beauty of the ruins might have been much enhanced by the prospective pay of the guards necessary to see them. So I made enquiries about ruins in the Druse country proper, and was told that Dûmas, and Tema, and Taafa, in the vicinity of Shakka, were worth seeing. We therefore decided on remaining where we were over the Sunday, and visiting the ruins on Monday.

After arrival at camp I was paid a visit by the Sheyk Harkul; he is second in rank to the Sheyk Harkul at Kanawât, but is held in great respect by the Druses, and considered a cleverer man; his name is Sheyk Ibrahim el Kathsawaneh. I was greatly taken by his intelligence and good manners, and promised at his request to visit him the following day. However, the next day, I found I was laid up in camp with a chill, and therefore could not go to him. After service, my wife and my younger son, attended by Najm, walked about Shakka (the ancient Saccea), and my son copied for me several inscriptions, one of which in Greek runs: 'Bassa built the tomb for himself, his wife, and his children. May he live long, and enjoy his children!'

Above the tomb was a conspicuous tower for doves to occupy.

Another ran, 'Saderathos built the tomb;' and again, 'Heracleitos built the tomb for himself, his wife, and his children;' and a fourth fragment had the conclusion of the



lines of an hexameter honorary decree followed by the words 'Long live the colony.'

My eldest son remained in camp with me. In the evening, feeling better, I sent a message to the Sheyk Harkul, regretting my inability to visit him, but hoping he would excuse me and give me the pleasure of his company at my tents again. He came after dinner, and I had a long conversation with him. I said that I was aware much of the Druse religion was secret, but would he permit me to question him, my object not being curiosity, but simply to understand the Druses better? Should I ask any question he might have a difficulty in answering, I begged him simply to say he could not answer, and I should not be offended; he replied he would gladly inform me in what he was able. I asked, 'Have you a recognised rule of punishments for offences?' He said, 'Yes.'

Query. 'Who enforces these punishments—the civil or the religious sheyk?'

Answer. 'Sometimes one, sometimes the other, according to whether the offence is against the civil or religious law.'

Q. 'Then have you two laws?'

A. 'No, but an offence may be against religion, or not.'

Q. 'What is your punishment against robbery?'

A. 'The robber must make fourfold return.'

Q. 'What is your punishment for murder?'

A. 'Death; but should the murderer run away and



escape, after a lapse of years, at least five, his relatives may, through the civil and religious sheyks, make an arrangement and a payment to the family of the murdered man. The offence is then condoned, and the murderer may return to his village in peace.'

Q. 'Is a Druse allowed more than one wife at a time?'

A. 'No.'

Q. 'May a Druse divorce his wife and marry another?'

A. 'Yes; but he must pay the wife he divorces a stipulated sum.'

Q. 'May the divorced wife marry again?'

A. 'Yes, of course.'

Q. 'Should an unmarried girl be found to have unlawful relations with a man, is she liable to punishment?'

A. 'Yes, and the punishment is death to both man and girl; but this is not a religious offence.'

Q. 'Is the punishment common?'

A. 'No. Usually the two run away together, and after a lapse of a year or two an arrangement is come to, and payment is made to the girl's relatives; afterwards they may be married, but even if not the offence is condoned, and they return to the village.'

Q. 'Should the offence be detected before they had time to run away, would they be allowed an opportunity to escape?'

A. 'No, they would both be put to death.'

Q. 'May I ask, according to the Druses' religion, what happens to the soul of a man after death?'

A long pause ensued, and then the sheyk said:

'There was once a Sheyk Harkul who thought much on the future of the soul, and he sent his servant to the chief Sheyk Harkul to say, "What becomes of the soul of a man when the man is dead?" So the servant went and came to the chief sheyk and said: "O sheyk, my master says, What becomes of the soul of man when the man is dead?" But the chief sheyk answered not a word, till he said to the servant, "Bring me here an old earthen pitcher full of water." And the servant brought it. And he said, "Bring me here a new earthen pitcher empty, and place it beside the old one." And the servant did so. Then the chief sheyk poured all the water from the old pitcher into the new one, and he brake the old pitcher. So the servant returned and came to his master, and his master enquired of him the answer, and he said, "O sheyk, he gave me no answer, but so did he unto the pitchers." So,' concluded Sheyk Ibrahim, 'no reply was given to the Sheyk Harkul, and I, O wowajah, can give thee no other answer.'

'But,' I said, 'O sheyk, of what pattern was the new pitcher?'

'The same as the old one,' he replied. And soon after, with his courteous and dignified manners, he wished me good-night, and left.

On Monday our two Druse guards provided for us by

Shibleh Bey, left us to return home. I gave them presents, and engaged two men in their place from Shakka, as they knew the country hereabouts better than Shibleh's men. I was sorry to wish them good-bye, as they had been most civil and attentive, and had endeavoured in every way to see that we had attention and respect from the other Druses.



ANCIENT BUILDING USED AS A MENZÛL.

The way to Dûmas lay to the eastward, over a fairly level plateau of land, all under cultivation. As we rode on I got as much information as possible from Najm, our dragoman, about the Druses. As a Maronite living in Lebanon he is, perhaps naturally, strongly prejudiced against them; but I think that this excursion amongst them tended to modify his



ideas. He says, 'The Druses are very fond of the Ingleez, but very bad to everyone else.' He tells me that one of the test questions to prove a man a Druse, and the proper answer are as follows:—

Q. 'Yaz ra'ūn fi bilad kūm hab el helalij?' ('Do they sow in your country the seed helalij?')

A. 'N'a'm fi kolāb el mū mennin.' ('Yes, in the heart of the believers.')

The meaning of the word helalij he says is unknown, except to the Druses.

The Druse meeting-house called kalmah, situated usually outside the village, is attended every Friday evening by the initiated, both men and women. The sheyk of religion reads their books; and their service, whatever it is, is performed; and the function concludes with eating raisins and dried figs. One can tell the initiated by their wearing a broader white turban.

When we arrived at Dûmas, we found it only a small village, but we discovered some underground caves, artificially, as we think, hollowed out of the rock. If not all artificial, at any rate, by the marks on the rock, they have been considerably enlarged, and were originally, we thought, intended for dwellings. But even these caves have been much pulled about by the present inhabitants, who in endeavouring to make the larger cave available as a stable for their cattle have entirely blocked up one portion, and partially filled up another part. In the caves we could find

no inscriptions, but over the door of a building now used as a stable we found one in Greek, stating that 'Gaudentius and Amphathe his wife built the tomb;' and in another stable an inscription, 'Philip, a veteran, held commands, built himself a tomb, died. Agare, daughter of Addos, completed it, with the help of her brother Sonacos.'



DECORATION ON LOWER SIDE OF STONE RAFTER AT DÛMAS.

Whilst I was copying these the Druses collected round, asking how I expected to find treasure by the inscription. I said: 'O Druses, these men of old time were no bigger fools than the men of this age. If you have treasure and hide it, you do not go straight and write with much trouble on a stone, In such a place have I hid my treasure, and then go and set the stone in a public place. Neither did the men of old do such foolish things.' They laughed and said I was right, but clearly remained convinced that I could not take all this trouble except for some prospective material gain.

We saw in one of the two menzûls—for Dûmas boasts two—a broken stone rafter carved with a wreath with two



ribands floating from it. Also in a house a broken stone bust, which I photographed.

From Dûmas we turned southward to Tema. A Bedouin with a lance as long as a Cossack's, on a smart grey horse, was greatly perturbed and exercised by the advent of our party. Tema; surely all these names from the Book of Job cannot be only a coincidence. The predatory tribes on the edge of the desert; the 'great wind from the wilderness' that smote the four corners of the house and buried Job's sons and daughters—points like this indicate a cultivated district on the edge of the desert. True to Oriental feeling and custom, the sole survivor of the catastrophe does not even mention the girls, but says, 'It fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.' And when you get the very names of the places mentioned in that ancient book, is it not strong evidence that here was the scene of Job's trials?

If so, surely along the direction of the ancient road, the line of which is plainly to be seen stretching away from Tema, must have travelled Eliphaz the Temanite, on his way to Job, after he had made the 'appointment' with Bildad and Zophar. We can picture him as he found the patriarch sitting on the heaps of rubbish outside his town, and sorely smitten with elephantiasis (the symptoms of which, including the night horrors, are so clearly described in *Diseases of the Bible*, by Sir Risdon Bennett, M.D.). These rubbish heaps are still a marked feature in every village in Jebel-Haurân.

It is noticeable that the commencement of the events narrated in the Book of Job must have occurred during the early part of the year, when they are ploughing in the Haurân. 'This may account for the very frequent allusions to wintry weather, cold, snow, ice, swollen streams and violent storms, which occur through the book' (note on Job i. 14. *Speaker's Commentary*).

In the sixth chapter of Job, and verses 15–17, the patriarch says, 'My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of the brooks they pass away; which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid; what time they wax warm, they vanish; when it is hot they are consumed out of their place.' The imagery of this passage is taken from a land intersected by ravines, deep wadys, dry in summer, and filled suddenly after storms by torrents from the neighbouring heights. This corresponds exactly with the Haurân, in which there is no river flowing through the summer, whereas in winter or spring, when these events took place, torrents rush with great impetuosity through cavernous ravines from the Jebel-Haurân (note in the *Speaker's Commentary*). The suddenness of wadys running was well illustrated by the Wady Luwa, which commenced to run in strong flood the very day we entered the Druse country.

From Tema we struck westwards, past Umm Dubeib to the village of Nimreh, where we found a great meeting of sheyks going on. I had heard of a man who had found a quantity of gold coins at Nimreh, and after making enquiries



we found him, and I bought two Venetian gold coins from him, one of Doge Domenico Contarini, and the other of Doge Antonio Giustiniano.

Nimreh, perched on the spur of a hill projecting into a deep valley, has been a considerable place, but being thickly inhabited by Druses, it has been much pulled about. There are the ruins of a temple with columns standing in front of it.

Descending the precipitous path from Nimreh, we crossed the Wady 'Ayun el Honish, and ascended the steep hill opposite by the ghost of a goat track; then following the line of hills to our right hand, we came in sight of the strong-walled town of Taafa, standing like Nimreh on a spur projecting into the valley of the wady that we had crossed. The town, absolutely deserted, looks wonderfully perfect from a little distance. On the summit of the ridge toward the western side are large reservoirs, still containing water. An esplanade of flagstones runs along the edge of these reservoirs and must have made a delightful promenade for the old inhabitants of Taafa.

We entered a large arched building, the roof of which has entirely fallen through. Crosses carved on the arches with Alpha and Omega below, show that it must have been a Christian church. There are other large buildings near a gateway in the northern wall, on one of which there is a dedicatory inscription of the building erected by Alexander. Near here we also found a Greek inscription of a list of names of persons who dedicated a tomb.



CHURCH AT TAAFA.



The streets of Taafa are very narrow, the majority of the houses have been two stories high, but the upper floors have mostly fallen in. In most instances the basements seem to have served as stables or store-rooms, for we found stone mangers in many of them, and the large stone vats that had been used for storing grain. Many bones and remains of animals, fresh and otherwise, and the fresh tracks and droppings, showed that the old rooms of Taafa now form convenient lodgings for a good many hyenas and wolves. We spent the whole of the afternoon exploring these ruins, and then descended the hill, passing at the bottom a Bedouin encampment, with many camels and goats, and a lot of ferocious dogs. Re-crossing the wady, we rode home to our camp at Shakka.

In the ruins below our camp, which the Druses call a convent, I photographed the next day a carving of a lion holding a gazelle in his forepaws, and also copied the following inscription—'Manchos, the son of Sagetes, built it in accordance with the vow of his children.'

Starting again, we sent our baggage direct to Khulkhûleh, whilst we made a detour further to the eastward, to see the town of Bathanieh (Batanea). Our ride lay the whole way through cultivated land, and we met several strong parties of Druses ploughing the land that was to lie fallow. On nearing Bathanieh we saw many of the bottle-shaped underground granaries or reservoirs, some fallen in, and some in a very dangerous state. In examining these granaries, it is always

best to dismount and approach carefully on foot; where there is one reservoir, there are always more, perhaps ready to give way at the least additional weight.

We dismounted in the courtyard of the menzûl, and after declining coffee, on the plea of wishing to go on as soon as



ANCIENT HOUSE. BATHANIEH, NOW OCCUPIED BY DRUSES.

possible, we proceeded to see the town. Some of the houses are in perfect order, with the upper floors, outer staircases, stone doors and windows quite intact. But the town has been re-peopled by the Druses, and their improvements will soon alter it. At the side of a stable door we found the dedicatory



DOORWAY, DEIR-ES-SHERIR.



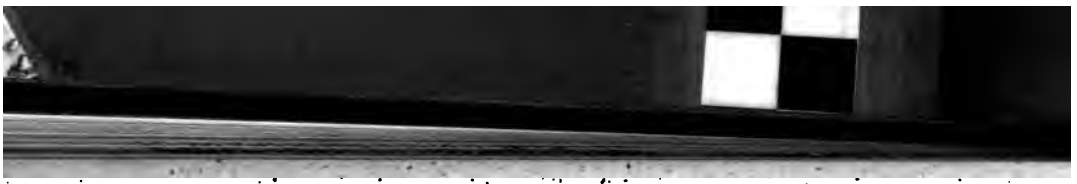
inscription of a watch-tower, and outside on a walk near the menzûl, the Greek inscription, 'Soados, son of Malichos, the wretched and hapless bridegroom, aged twenty.' One's heart goes out to Soados; how was he so hapless?

From here, passing Tell el Churzal on our left and Tell el Kalehdirgeh on our right, and descending continually but gradually from the high ground towards the Lejâh, we came to some ruins called by the Druses, 'Deir-es-Sherir,' or the Convent of Barley. The ruins are of considerable extent, but the doorway and double stone doors are alone perfect. Over the doorway is an excellently preserved inscription stating that 'Diomedes Dareius, a præfect of great King Agrippa, raised the building from its foundation.' Leaving the ruins we descended till we emerged on the plain opposite the village of Lahiteh, and stopped for rest and luncheon near El Hadr.

The unaccustomed heat in the lower plain made us glad to canter on to Khulkhûleh, where our old guards and friends came crowding round to try to kiss our hands and welcome us back.

Next day we bade them all farewell, and followed the trail back to Brâk. There the military in the fort honoured us with a salute from a trumpet, and we entered again the country under the direct rule of the Sultan.

We rode along the old trail to Deir Ali, the wind blowing strong and keenly, and found our camp admirably pitched out of the wind under a vineyard wall. The following morning



we made a very early start, and reaching El Kisweh, which looked lovely in its groves of poplar-trees, we cantered on by the side of the great Haj road through the luxuriant Damascus plain. It was rich with its dark green wealth of growing corn. Soon we reached the city. Walking our horses down the long street, we arrived at the hotel shortly after midday. That evening we had a most pleasant dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Eyres, and afterwards Mr. Eyres drove me off to call on the wâli. We found him at home, in his private house on the road to Salahiyeh, and after I had thanked him for his kind permission to see the country, which had been granted to no one for many years, we had coffee and cigarettes. Mr. Eyres accompanied me to the hotel, where we sat up and talked over the trip and the country, till late.

We left Damascus the following day about eleven o'clock, the young ladies from the consulate kindly riding some miles with us. The road is so well known that it need no description; but anything more lovely than the view of the Mediterranean, its pale blue flecked with fleecy clouds down far below, from the highest point of the road over Lebanon, I have never seen. We reached Beyrout in time to catch an Austrian Lloyd's steamer to Port Said; and thence came home by the Orient steamer Oroya.[1]

[1] My grateful thanks are due to Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, Principal Librarian at the British Museum, for his kindness in translating the inscriptions, and for the time and trouble he devoted to assisting me both before my journey and after.

We collected the following :—

A small bronze frog, about B.C. 500. Egypt.
A scarabæus. Phœnician work. Hawk and Lion.
A copper coin. Roman. Constantine the Younger.
„ „ „ Probus.
„ „ „ Salorina.
„ „ „ Diocletian.
2 copper coins. „ Licinius.
1 copper coin. B.C. 7 to A.D. 40. Aretas II. (Philodemos) and Chulda, King and Queen of the Nabatheans.
„ „ Seleucus IV., King of Syria.
„ „ Phœnician. Sidon.
„ „ Roman. Diocletian.
„ „ Damascus under Roman empire.
A silver coin. Roman. Hadrian.
„ „ „ Trajan.
„ „ Ayyubi. Salah ad Din.
„ „ „ Salih Ismail.
„ „ Egypt. Ptolemy I.

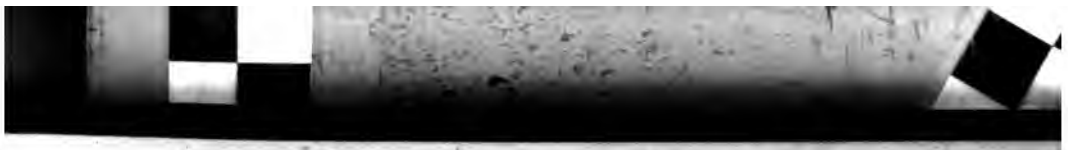
Two gold coins. Venetian. Doge Domenico Contarini, and Doge Antonio Giustiniano.

A bronze bowl. Kurdish work.

THE END.

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